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ARTICLES

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF AMERICAN SLOVAKS: BISHOP JÁN VOJTAŠŠÁK'S ABORTED JOURNEY TO THE USA IN 1923

Štefan Kucík

In 1923 Msgr. Ján Vojtaššák, bishop of the diocese of Spiš in Slovakia, decided to undertake a pastoral journey to Slovak Catholics in the United States of America. However, Czechoslovak authorities refused to issue him a passport. They considered his trip to be political. It turns out that Vojtaššák's planned journey conflicted with Czechoslovak government plans to strike a decisive blow against the growing autonomist movement among American Slovaks. Upon hearing of this refusal, the Slovak Catholic Federation in America published an open letter to Tomáš G. Masaryk, president of the Czechoslovak Republic, in which they expressed their disappointment over the policies of both the president and his government. To counteract the impact of this letter, the Czechoslovak Consulate General in New York issued another open letter to the president, ostensibly by a group of American Slovaks who supported him and his government. Interestingly, this "anti-letter" was written by an official of Czechoslovak intelligence.

While many scholars have dealt with the biography of bishop Ján Vojtaššák, only Róbert Letz has provided us with a thorough explanation of the reason for which the Czechoslovak authorities refused to grant him passport in 1923.¹ In this context, however, no one has pointed to the open letters addressed to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk issued by the Slovak Catholic Federation and the Czechoslovak Consulate General in New York. The present article will try to fill this gap, as well as to put the matter into a broader context.

¹ Róbert Letz, "Biskup Ján Vojtaššák a slovenská politika v medzivojnovom období," in *Spišský biskup Ján Vojtaššák*, Ivan Chalupecký, ed. (Spišská Kapitula-Spišské Podhradie: Kňazský seminár biskupa Jána Vojtaššáka, 2003), 25-52.

After Ján Vojtaššák had been appointed bishop of Spiš towards the end of 1920,² along with Marián Blaha for the diocese of Banská Bystrica and Karol Kmet'ko for the diocese of Nitra, American Slovaks rejoiced. As early as December 22, 1920, editor Jozef Hušek wrote in the Catholic weekly *Jednota*: "Only those who look at the deep religious sentiment of our people, and their simple faith and devotion to the Holy Church, can understand what it means for Catholic Slovaks to have apostles of their own flesh and blood, of their national sentiment and outlook."³

Msgr. Ján Vojtaššák was ordained a bishop in Nitra on February 13, 1921. In a fortnight he assumed his office in Spišská Kapitula. In his first pastoral letter, Vojtaššák outlined a program of his future activities. He was aware of the negative consequences of the Great War. He realized that the war had caused many to lose their faith in God, and felt that the war's ravages threatened the very basis of love for one's neighbours. It not only produced a lot of cripples, but largely devastated people's spiritual values. At war's end materialism and the class struggle began to appear and hatred toward the Catholic Church grew. In Czechoslovakia, the strong anti-Catholic character of the new political system was evident right after the war. The Czechs did not show much consideration for the religiosity of Slovakia. They also tended to undervalue the contribution of the Slovak Catholic clergy in the creation of the common independent state,⁴ whether in Slovakia or in the USA, and tended to forget that Roman Catholics constituted the vast majority of both populations.

The Czechoslovak government, however, was not satisfied with just the secularization of the new country. It also decided to transfer its anti-Catholicism to Czech and Slovak communities in America. In order to promote the newly established Czechoslovak Church among American compatriots, it sent a mission led by its first bishop Gorazd Pavlík to the USA. In connection with this mission, which

² For the appointment, ordination and enthronement of bishop Ján Vojtaššák see Ivan Chalupický, "Obsadenie spišského biskupského stolca po roku 1918," in Chalupický, *Spišský biskup Ján Vojtaššák*, 7-24.

³ Jozef Paučo, *75 rokov Prvej Katolíckej Slovenskej Jednoty 1890 – 1965* (Cleveland: Prvá Katolícka Slovenská Jednota, 1965), 165.

⁴ Ivan Chalupický, *Biskup Ján Vojtaššák: K jeho verejnej a politickej činnosti* (Ružomberok: Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku, Filozofická fakulta, 2009), 21-25.

was carried out between June 1922 and January 1923,⁵ an incident which became infamous in the history of the Slovak Catholic Church occurred. It filled both Slovak Catholics in Czechoslovakia and in America with much indignation. The incident lay behind the refusal of Czechoslovak authorities to grant a passport to the bishop of Spiš.

Ján Vojtaššák had decided to travel to America as early as December of 1922. He had reached his decision on the basis of a circular letter issued by Antonín Cyril Stojan, Archbishop of Olomouc. Addressed to all ordinaries in Slovakia, the letter was based upon an earlier one sent by Czech Catholic priests in America on the basis of instructions received from the Czech episcopate. They had been asked to try to paralyze Gorazd Pavlík's activities, because some Slovak priests in America had begun to affiliate with the new Czechoslovak Church. The Czech priests emphasized that they had not succeeded in their work among American Slovaks because they were Czechs and not Slovaks. Had the episcopate sent Slovak priests among American Slovaks, these would have been more successful.⁶

This circular letter, as well as reports published in Slovak-American newspapers and republished in Slovakia, plus a number of private letters received from individuals across the United States, led bishop Vojtaššák to decide to lead a mission to the USA.⁷ He was also aware that many Slovak Catholics in America came from his diocese. Vojtaššák's mission was fully supported by the Czech mission of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in the USA, as well as by Archbishop A. C. Stojan and other Slovak and Czech bishops, along with the former apostolic nuncio Clemente Micara. The Holy See also agreed with Vojtaššák's planned journey to America.⁸

Bishop Vojtaššák began to prepare for his trip in April of 1923. Slovak organizations in the USA were informed of his coming.⁹ In May of the same year, Vojtaššák applied for a passport. Although at that time passports were usually granted by district authorities, Vojtaššák's application was forwarded to the Ministry with Full Powers for the Administration of Slovakia in Bratislava. Thence it was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, whence it was

⁵ Letz, "Biskup...", 47.

⁶ *Slovák* (Bratislava), July 5, 1923, 1; *Jednota* (Middletown, PA), July 25, 1923, 4.

⁷ *Slovák*, July 5, 1923, 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Letz, "Biskup...", 44.

returned back to Bratislava. This kind of procrastination continued for a month. To try to expedite matters, Vojtaššák travelled to Bratislava and even to Prague, but his efforts proved fruitless. The parliamentary deputy of the Czechoslovak People's Party Václav Myslivec, as well as some parliamentary deputies of the Slovak People's Party, intervened with the Minister of the Interior Jan Malypetr. The latter, however, refused to grant bishop Vojtaššák a passport with the comment that "he knows Catholic bishops who lie."¹⁰

In order to comprehend such a rude refusal, one needs to understand the situation in the Slovak-American community in the first years after the creation of Czechoslovakia. After Tomáš G. Masaryk had left America in the fall 1918, the Executive Committee of the Slovak League of America met in Cleveland to decide on sending a delegation to Slovakia.¹¹ According to Albert P. Mamatey, president of the League,¹² the delegates were to make contact with political leaders in the old country and to let them know about the Pittsburgh Agreement concluded with T. G. Masaryk in May of 1918.¹³

Upon their arrival in Slovakia, the delegates acted impartially. In their *Privet delegácie Slovenskej ligy v Amerike* [Address of the Delegation of the Slovak League of America] dated April 9, 1919, they expressed their surprise at the growing political struggles in Slovakia. Therefore, they initially hesitated to give the Pittsburgh Agreement to Vavro Šrobár, the Minister Responsible for Slovakia, or to Ferdiš Juriga or Andrej Hlinka, the most popular priests and politicians in the Slovak People's Party.¹⁴ They considered the political squabbles among the many new political parties a waste of energy for a small nation.¹⁵

Upon their return to the USA, two of the delegates, Jozef Hušek, the editor of *Jednota* and Milan Getting, the editor of *New Yorkský denník*, reported on the situation in Slovakia at the 12th Congress of the Slovak League held in Scranton, PA, on May 29, 1919. Jozef

¹⁰ *Slovák*, July 5, 1923, 1.

¹¹ *Nové Slovensko* (Pittsburgh, PA), December 2, 1918, 2-3.

¹² Albert Pavol Mamatey was the president of the Slovak League of America from 1911 to 1920.

¹³ *Zpráva predsedu Slovenskej Ligy v Amerike, podaná na XII. Kongresse Slov. Ligy v Scranton, Pa., dňa 29. mája 1919* (Pittsburgh, PA: Slovak League of America), 9.

¹⁴ Karol Sidor, *Slováci v zahraničnom odboji* (Bratislava, 1929), 226-227.

¹⁵ *Slovák*, May 3, 1919, 1.

Hušek advised American Slovaks to be careful in pressing for the autonomy of Slovakia as promised in the Pittsburgh Agreement, because at that time it might help Magyar efforts to re-annex Slovakia to Hungary. However, he did not abandon his claim to the autonomy of Slovakia. He postponed it to a time when the situation in Slovakia would improve.¹⁶ Milan Getting, on the other hand, did not even mention the autonomy of Slovakia. He reported on his plan of agitation against Magyarization in Slovakia. He worked out this plan on the basis of a suggestion made by Minister V. Šrobár. Since Šrobár was short of funds, Getting returned to the USA to ask American Slovaks to purchase a printing press for Minister Šrobár's agitation.¹⁷

Despite Jozef Hušek's advice not to immediately press for the autonomy of Slovakia and Milan Getting's ignoring of the issue, American Slovaks began to very heatedly discuss this matter.¹⁸ On July 31, 1919, the Executive Committee of the Slovak League of America met in Pittsburgh and accepted the brochure *Politická náuka vzhľadom na Česko-Slovenský štát* [Political Perspective Regarding the Czecho-Slovak State]¹⁹ as the basis of its future activities. The brochure stated that the Slovak League of America decided to support its program of autonomy for Slovakia based upon the Pittsburgh Agreement. The final arrangement of the Czecho-Slovak state, however, it left to the Slovaks in the old country.²⁰

Another representative of the Slovak League of America, who reported on the situation in Slovakia right after the World War I, was Ignác Gessay. However, he did not belong to the above mentioned delegation. This renowned Slovak-American editor was sent to Slovakia somewhat later. The reason for his mission was a lack of reliable information from Europe at the beginning of 1919.²¹ American

¹⁶ *Zpráva predsedu Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike, podaná na XII. Kongresse Slov. Lígy v Scranton, Pa., dňa 29. mája 1919* (Pittsburgh, 1919), 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

¹⁸ Sidor, *Slováci...*, 231.

¹⁹ *Archív Spolku sv. Vojtecha v Trnave*, Trnava, Slovak Republic (hereinafter ASSV), fascicle (hereinafter fasc.) 299K3. Zápisnica zo schôdze Ústrednej správy Slovenskej Lígy vydrživanej dňa 31. júla 1919 v Henry Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pa. The brochure was written by editor Ján A. Ferienčík and published by the Slovak League of America in 1919. Informally, it was called „*Politický Katechismus*“ [Political Catechism].

²⁰ Ján A. Ferienčík, *Politická náuka vzhľadom na Česko-Slovenský štát* (Pittsburgh: Slovenská liga v Amerike, 1919), 7.

²¹ *Dobry Pastier*, April 1919, 7.

Slovaks, therefore, decided to establish an information office, at first in Paris, and once regular postal service had been established between Czecho-Slovakia and the USA, in Slovakia too.²² This task was entrusted to Ignác Gessay, at that time an editor of *Nové Slovensko*,²³ official organ of the Slovak League of America.²⁴

In his report to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Slovak League held in Pittsburgh on October 24, 1919, Gessay recommended that American Slovaks take a neutral stand on the issue of Slovak autonomy. He suggested a gradual implementation of the Pittsburgh Agreement and warned radical Slovak-American autonomists that immediate autonomy would have been fatal for the new republic.²⁵ Both Gessay's and Hušek's initial reports had a huge impact on the official stand of the Slovak League towards autonomy. Jozef Hušek, however, would gradually change his mind and then would support the autonomist movement in Slovakia.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Slovak League on October 24, 1919, two delegates of the Slovak People's Party, the Rev. Jozef Rudinský and Jozef Kubala, also appeared. Jozef Rudinský had been sent to the USA by several leaders of the Slovak People's Party led by Andrej Hlinka in August of 1919. He had been chosen as a trustworthy person whose task it was to defend the idea of Slovak autonomy within the Czecho-Slovak Republic among American Slovaks, and to inform them of the Party's activities. In addition, Rudinský was supposed to raise funds for the autonomist movement. On the suggestion of the Rev. František Jehlička, Jozef Kubala, a merchant from Vrbové, joined Rudinský before his departure to the USA. In Poland, however, they both joined the Rev. Hlinka's delegation to Paris, in an attempt to have autonomy for Slovakia included in the Paris Peace Treaties. After a week's stay in the capital of France and the delegation's expulsion from that country, Ru-

²² *Slovenský národný archív*, Bratislava, Slovak Republic (hereinafter SNA), fund (hereinafter f.) Slovenská liga v Amerike [Slovak League of America], folder (hereinafter fold.) 2. Albert Mamatey to František Stas, April 17, 1919.

²³ *Nové Slovensko*, official organ of the Slovak League of America in 1918-1922.

²⁴ Ignác Gessay, *Slovensko po oslobodení* (Cleveland: Slovenská liga v Amerike), 4; ASSV, fasc. 236C10. Authorization for Ignác Gessay, April 26, 1919.

²⁵ Gessay, *Slovensko...*, 26-28, 37-38.

dinský and Kubala continued on their original journey to the United States, where they arrived on October 13, 1919.²⁶

At the time of the delegates' trip to the USA the majority of American Slovaks felt distaste for the policy of the Slovak People's Party.²⁷ This aversion arose mainly from the reports of Jozef Hušek and Ignác Gessay, as well as Andrej Hlinka's faux pas in connection with his rash journey to the Paris Peace Conference. Another reason was the fact that the delegates arrived in America with Polish passports and Polish visas, and not Czecho-Slovak.²⁸

Having presented their credentials to the League, Jozef Rudinský was asked to explain his mission to America. He clarified the position of the Slovak People's Party at length. Like the Slovak League of America, the People's Party demanded gradual autonomy for Slovakia based upon the Pittsburgh Agreement. It also wanted autonomy for Slovakia to be included in the Paris Peace Treaties. Therefore, he had come to the USA, along with Jozef Kubala, to agitate for autonomy and to raise funds towards this end.²⁹

Although the Executive Committee of the Slovak League did not find anything contrary to its program in the Rudinský mission, it nevertheless took a negative stand towards it. Rudinský and Kubala did not have any credentials from the Czecho-Slovak government and the League did not agree with Hlinka's journey to the Paris Peace Conference. The League accused the delegates of driving a wedge between the Slovaks and Czechs in America, which might have had a negative impact on their coexistence in the USA, as well as in Czecho-Slovakia.³⁰ On the other hand, the Executive Commit-

²⁶ Róbert Letz, "Jozef Rudinský – významná osobnosť Turzovky," in *Turzovka krížom-krážom*, Ivan Gajdičiar ed. (Turzovka: Spolok priateľov Turzovky, 2010), 328–329.

²⁷ Jozef Rudinský, *V Amerike a doma* (Ružomberok: Lev, 1921), 11.

²⁸ Karol Sidor, "Zásahy Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike do politického vývinu slovenského (1914 – 1939)," in *Slovenská liga v Amerike štyridsaťročná*, Mikuláš Šprinc, ed. (Scranton, PA: Slovenská liga v Amerike, 1947), 54.

²⁹ ASSV, fasc. 299A6. Zápisnica zo schôdze Ústredného výboru Slovenskej ligy v Amerike vydržiavanej dňa 24. októbra 1919 vo Fort Pitt Hoteli v Pittsburgh, Penna.

³⁰ *Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd České republiky*, v. v. i., *Archiv ÚTGM*, Prague, Czech Republic (hereinafter MÚA AV ČR, AÚTGM), f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R – republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 459. Rezolúcia Slovenskej Lígy prijatá na schôdzi ústrednej správy s ústredným výborom Slov. Lígy, vydržiavanej v Pittsburghu, Pa., dňa 24. a 25. októbra t. r. Attachment of letter of Albert Mamatey to V. Šrobár, November 22, 1919. (For the letter without attachments see *Slovenské*

tee issued a memorandum, in which American Slovaks demanded the gradual implementation of the provisions of the Pittsburgh Agreement in the newly-created Czecho-Slovakia.³¹ The resolution against Jozef Rudinský and Jozef Kubala and the League's subsequent memorandum expressed American Slovaks' efforts to remain devoted to their program of the autonomy of Slovakia within the Czecho-Slovak Republic. On the other hand, it also reflected their efforts to maintain their neutral stand and not to be drawn into political affairs in Slovakia.

In such a situation, the delegates of the Slovak People's Party could not rely on the authority of the Slovak League of America. They, therefore, approached two Slovak-American organizations which disagreed with the League's stand: the Slovak Catholic Federation and the First Catholic Slovak Union. Jozef Rudinský expressed his ideas mainly in the weekly *Jednota*, where he was assisted by Jozef Hušek, and in the newspaper *Obrana*, which was edited by the Rev. Ján Metod Liščinský.³²

While Rudinský and Kubala, assisted by Slovak-American Catholic organizations, were agitating in the USA for Slovak autonomy, Albert Mamatey left on a three-month journey (December 10, 1919 – March 14, 1920) to Czecho-Slovakia. His intentions were very much the same as that of the delegates of the Slovak People's Party in the USA, i.e. that the Pittsburgh Agreement should be incorporated into the future Czecho-Slovak Constitution.

Upon his return to the United States, Mamatey reported to a meeting of the Executive Committee in Pittsburgh on April 8, 1920.³³ He had traveled to Czecho-Slovakia via France and Switzerland. In Paris, he had met with Štefan Osuský, the general secretary of the Czecho-Slovak delegation to the Peace Conference and a

vyst'ahovalectvo: Dokumenty 3, František Bielik, Elo Rákoš, eds. (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1976), 165-172, document no. 325); *ASSV*, fasc. 299A9. Prehlas a verejné osvedčenie Slov. Lígy.

³¹ *MÚA AV ČR, AÚTGM*, f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R - republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 459. Memorandum Slovenskej Lígy Prijaté na schôdzi ústrednej správy s ústredným výborom Slov. Lígy, vydržiavanej v Pittsburghu, Pa., dňa 24. a 25. októbra t. r. Attachment of letter of Albert Mamatey to V. Šrobár, November 22, 1919; *Jednota*, October 29, 1919, 1.

³² Sidor, *Slováci...*, 235; Letz, "Jozef Rudinský...", 329-330.

³³ *ASSV*, fasc. 299A4. Zápisnica zo zasadnutia ústr. a výko. výboru Slov. lígy 8. apr. 1920 vo Fort Pitt Hoteli, Pittsburgh, Pa.

delegate of the Slovak League of America to Masaryk in 1916.³⁴ When Mamatey suggested that the Slovaks should have been contractually guaranteed their home rule at the Paris Peace Conference in the same way as had the Ruthenians, Osuský offered the following explanation:

*"During the whole war, we cooperated and worked with our brothers the Czechs for our independence as a UNIT, as two branches of one nation that belong together. Thanks to this UNIFIED stand with our brothers the Czechs, the Allies recognized our independence, our separation from the Magyars and our joining with the Czechs."*³⁵

Osuský, however, was not worried about the future of the Slovaks. He promised that they would get everything that they asked for and that they wished, except for things that might be detrimental to them: "Because what we do not want, what would be detrimental or destructive for Slovakia, as for instance, a separate Diet at this time, nobody from the outside will force upon us nor put into our minds."³⁶

After this meeting, the intervention of Albert Mamatey on behalf of the autonomy of Slovakia sounded unconvincing. He had met with T. G. Masaryk, the President of Czecho-Slovakia, with Edvard Beneš, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with Vavro Šrobár, the Minister with Full Powers for the Administration of Slovakia, and others. In February of 1920, Mamatey had also taken part in the meeting of the Club of Slovak Parliamentary Deputies. Almost all with whom he had negotiated, had agreed with the view that at that time the autonomy of Slovakia with a separate Diet would have been fatal for Slovakia. Mamatey, however, had negotiated only with the members of

³⁴ For more on Osuský, his earlier life in America and his mission to Europe, see M. Mark Stolarik, "The Role of American Slovaks in the Creation of Czecho-Slovakia," *Slovak Studies*, 8 (1968), 27-30 and 57-66.

³⁵ *Zpráva Predsedu Slovenskej Lígy v Amerike, podaná Ústrednému Výboru Slov. Lígy v Pittsburghu, Pa. dňa 8. apríla 1920 o jeho ceste a misi v Česko-slovenskej republike* (Pittsburgh, 1920), 8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

the centralist Czechoslovak political parties and opponents of the legislative autonomy of Slovakia.

In connection with the meeting of the Club of Slovak Parliamentary Deputies a regrettable incident occurred. The Club had passed a resolution which was supposed to confirm that in the draft Constitution there be included everything that had been promised in the Pittsburgh Agreement, except for a separate Diet. However, the signatures of the deputies of the Slovak People's Party (Alois Kolísek, Ján Kovalík, Štefan Onderčo, Jozef Sivák and Florián Tománek) on the resolution had been forged. This affair came to light only after the resolution had been cited in full in the Memorandum of the Slovak League of America addressed to the Government and National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1922.³⁷ Even if the resolution significantly influenced the future attitudes of American Slovaks to the issue of the autonomy of Slovakia, it seems that it did not have a great impact on the views of Albert Mamatey.

On February 28, 1920, one day before he left Czecho-Slovakia, Albert Mamatey received a letter from Milan Hodža, the Minister for the Unification of Laws and one of the main Slovak political leaders. In this letter, Hodža had also rejected a separate Slovak Diet. Despite the unwillingness of the main political representatives to accept the claim to a Slovak Diet, Albert Mamatey did not hesitate to conclude his report with the words: "Slovakia may look forward to a great future," although he added that "it would take some time."³⁸ However, it is well-known how important a separate Diet was for American Slovaks. Jozef Hušek expressed their outlook very clearly: "Autonomy without a Diet, without legislation, is no autonomy. Indeed, autonomy is a Diet and a Diet is autonomy! Without a Diet there is no autonomy!"³⁹

Albert Mamatey must have been aware of the importance of a separate Slovak Diet to fulfill the promise of autonomy. He must have also known that if the requirement of a separate Slovak Diet had been deleted from the Pittsburgh Agreement, the latter would have been worthless. His attitude on the issue of the autonomy of

³⁷ *Memorandum Slovenskej Ligy v Amerike upravené na vládu a Národné Shromaždenie Česko-Slovenskej Republiky v záujme vtelenia Pittsburghskej Dohody do ústavy Č-S Republiky* (Pittsburgh: Slovak League of America, 1922).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁹ *Jednota*, February 18, 1920, 4.

Slovakia began to change by the beginning of 1919. In one of his letters addressed to Dr. Miloslav Francisci of Cleveland, son of a famous Slovak revolutionary hero of 1848, Mamatey wrote:

*"I have been fighting for the national individuality of the Slovak nation for over four years. I have insisted that the Slovaks are not just an "appendix" of the Czech nation, but the Slovaks are as independent a nation as the Czechs. However, I have gotten tired of the constant fighting. Anyways, the fate of the Slovak nation will not be determined by us from America, but by those back home. – You, I and hundreds of others here in America have done our duty."*⁴⁰

In accordance with his changed attitude towards autonomy for Slovakia and his hardly concealable inclination towards government policy, which was fuelled by the promise of the office of Czechoslovak consul in Pittsburgh, Albert Mamatey decided to paralyze the agitation of Jozef Rudinský and Jozef Kubala among American Slovaks. To this end he arranged that two delegates of the Czechoslovak government were sent to America. The mission of the Roman Catholic priest Ladislav Moyš and the social democrat Ján Pocisk, did not bear fruit. They failed to persuade American Slovaks to approve of the Czechoslovak Constitution and their activities in the USA were deplored by the "Response" [Ohlas] of the Slovak Catholic Federation.⁴¹

In response to the steps taken by Albert Mamatey and by the Executive Committee of the Slovak League of America, Jozef Hušek announced his resignation from the League. He accused the leading League officials of having knowingly and intentionally missed the opportunity to have Slovakia constitutionally guaranteed the right to

⁴⁰ Albert Mamatey to M. Francisci, January 22, 1919. It was published in Konštantín Čulen, "Zo zaviatych listov (Z korešpondencie A. Mamateya s Dr. M. Franciscim)," in *Literárny almanach Slováka v Amerike na rok 1962* (Middletown, Pa.: Hrobak Publications), 147.

⁴¹ *Dobrý Pastier* (Middletown, PA), April 1920, 14-15; Ján Pankuch, *Dejiny cleve-landských a lakewoodských Slovákov* (Cleveland, 1930), 188; Konštantín Čulen, *Pittsburghská dohoda* (Bratislava: Kníhtlaciareň Andreja, 1937), 274; Paučo, 162-163; Natália Krajčovičová, "Americkí Slováci a slovenskí autonomisti v prvých rokoch po vzniku ČSR," in Miroslav Pekník et al., *Ferdinand Juriga: ľudový smer slovenskej politiky* (Bratislava: VEDA, 2009), 260.

home rule and individual national, cultural and economic life within the Czechoslovak Republic. Moreover, he accused the League's officials of morally and financially supporting agitation against the Pittsburgh Agreement.⁴² As a result, no Slovak-American Catholic organization attended the 13th Congress of the Slovak League held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 24-25, 1920.⁴³

After the Congress, the Slovak League of America was subjected to a lot of criticism by Jozef Hušek. The latter concluded that the League "ceases to be the moral and official representative of the Slovak-American colony."⁴⁴ As a result, the role that had been played in the promotion of Slovak national demands by the Slovak League of America began to be played by representatives of Slovak American Catholics led by the Slovak Catholic Federation and those organizations with which the Federation closely co-operated.⁴⁵

However, after the Slovak National Party had split from the Slovak National and Agrarian Party in March of 1921 in order to be able more vigorously to demand the legislative autonomy of Slovakia, the Slovak League of America, led by its new president Ivan Bielek,⁴⁶ began to change its stand. One of the first consequences of the creation of the Slovak National Party was the adoption of a compromise declaration requesting the enactment of the Pittsburgh Agreement at the conference of the representatives of American Slovaks in Washington, DC, on May 21, 1921. In this declaration, American Slovaks demanded that the Pittsburgh Agreement be incorporated into the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic. They also requested the gradual autonomy of Slovakia.⁴⁷ Another event that influenced the Slovak League of America was the secession of the Slovak People's

⁴² *Jednota*, June 19, 1920, 4.

⁴³ Paučo, 160.

⁴⁴ *Jednota*, July 7, 1920, 4.

⁴⁵ Paučo, 160.

⁴⁶ Ivan Bielek, a former newspaper editor, was the president of the Slovak League of America from 1920 to 1934. As the first vice-president of the League, Bielek became its president after Albert Mamatey resigned in September of 1920 due to his appointment as a consul of the Czechoslovak Republic in Pittsburgh. *Jednota*, September 22, 1920, 2; *Slovak Institute and Reference Library in Cleveland* (hereinafter SIRL), fasc. Mamatey, Albert 1870 – 1923. "Pán Mamatey sa vzdáva predsedníctva Slov. Lígy," newspaper clipping, September 17, 1920.

⁴⁷ Čulen, *Pittsburghská dohoda*, 317, 320.

Party from the common parliamentary club of the Czechoslovak People's Party in November of 1921.⁴⁸

On June 28-30 1922, the 14th Congress of the Slovak League of America was held in Pittsburgh. The Congress was attended by the vice-president of the Slovak National Party and the Rev. Anton Kompánek. The latter called upon American Slovaks not to give up on the Pittsburgh Agreement.⁴⁹ His mission in the USA was to rally autonomist forces, both in America and in Slovakia.⁵⁰

The congress then split into two camps – autonomists and centralists. Nevertheless, the delegates supported the Pittsburgh Agreement almost unanimously and they ordered the Executive Board “to write to Prague.”⁵¹ The Executive Board then sent a Memorandum to the Government and National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic requesting that the Pittsburgh Agreement be incorporated into the Czechoslovak Constitution. They also demanded gradual autonomy for Slovakia.⁵²

The 14th Congress of the Slovak League of America was very important for the future orientation of this organization. In spite of expectations that the crisis within the League would deepen, the Congress became a new concentration of autonomist forces. However, the concentration was only reached with great effort. The June 29, 1922 debate about the Pittsburgh Agreement was long and lasted until 11:00 p.m.⁵³

The discussion on the Pittsburgh Agreement at the Congress was significantly influenced by Anton Kompánek. Once in America, he began to create a united front for the recognition of the Pittsburgh

⁴⁸ *Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky*, Prague, Czech Republic (hereinafter AMZV ČR), f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, inventory number (hereinafter i. no.) 22, fold. 617. Complementary report to the report “Hlinkovci v Americe” by M. Getting, director of ČSTK in Washington, DC, January 24, 1922.

⁴⁹ *Zápisnica XIV. Kongressu Slovenskej Lígy vydžňavaneho v dňoch 28., 29. a 30. júna 1922 v Moose Temple, Pittsburgh, Pa.* (Pittsburgh, 1922), 83.

⁵⁰ Krajčovičová, 262.

⁵¹ *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 617. Complementary report to the report “Slovenské veci v Amerike”, July 1, 1922 by M. Getting, director of ČSTK in Washington, DC, July 7, 1922; *Archiv Krajanského múzea Matice slovenskej*, Bratislava (hereinafter AKM MS), f. Ignác Gessay, fold. 1. Telegram to I. Gessay (torso, without sender, undated).

⁵² See footnote 37.

⁵³ Róbert Letz, “Slovenská liga v Amerike a Slovenská liga na Slovensku,” in *Historický zborník*, 19 (No. 1, 2009), 65; *Obrana*, June 27, 1922, 3 and July 4, 1922, 1.

Agreement through his articles, which were published in the Slovak American press. In a series of articles in *Obrana*, Kompánek recommended that Slovak autonomy be achieved gradually, and only within the Czechoslovak Republic. As for American Slovaks, he was convinced that there was not as much disunity over the issue of autonomy as in the old country. He admitted, on the other hand, that there were also some personal antipathies (Bielek versus Hušek, with the former favoring the Slovak National Party over the Slovak People's Party).⁵⁴

Anton Kompánek tried to eliminate these disagreements and he invited supporters of Slovak autonomy to a conference in Pittsburgh on October 12, 1922. At this conference, he stressed that the fate of the Pittsburgh Agreement was in the hands of American Slovaks. He stated that it was not enough to issue resolutions, but it was necessary to work systematically and support materially the movement for the autonomy of Slovakia directly in Slovakia. At the conference, a five-member committee was elected to coordinate the work on behalf of the Pittsburgh Agreement. It was named the Committee of Friends of Slovak Freedom and its members were Štefan Kočiš, Ján Pan-kuch, Ivan Bielek, Ján Bibza and Jozef Hušek. The latter was elected its president. The aim of the Committee was to unite all Slovak American organizations, their newspapers and public officials in the struggle for the enactment of the Pittsburgh Agreement. Another goal of the new organization was to try to create a coalition of all autonomist parties in Slovakia.⁵⁵

Even though Ivan Bielek had attended the conference in Pittsburgh as a private person,⁵⁶ once the Committee of Friends of Slovak Freedom was established, the "centralists" were expelled from the Slovak League of America.⁵⁷ This happened at the meeting of the Executive Committee with the Executive Board held on June 27-28 in Cleveland,⁵⁸ and was completed and approved at the 15th Con-

⁵⁴ Krajčovičová, 262-263.

⁵⁵ *Jednota*, October 18, 1922, 4; Krajčovičová, 263.

⁵⁶ *Zápisnica schôdze Ústredného výboru s Ústrednou správou Slovenskej ligy v Amerike vydržiavanej v dňoch 27. a 28. júna 1923 v budove Y.M.C.A., Cleveland, O.*, 13.

⁵⁷ *Jednota*, July 4, 1923, 4; Krajčovičová, 264.

⁵⁸ *Zápisnica schôdze Ústredného výboru s Ústrednou správou Slovenskej ligy v Amerike vydržiavanej v dňoch 27. a 28. júna 1923 v budove Y.M.C.A., Cleveland, O.*, 73.

gress of the League held on May 27-29, 1924 in Binghamton, New York.⁵⁹

In terms of the resolution of its 14th congress, the Slovak League of America reacted negatively to the new activities of Jozef Rudinský in the USA in 1923. This time, contrary to his first mission among American Slovaks, Rudinský, who had switched sides, and had become a major supporter of Milan Hodža, came to the USA in the service of the Czechoslovak government. The League also rejected a similar mission by Vavro Šrobár and Václav Maule, a Czech professor and head of the branch of the Ministry of Education in Bratislava. They came in the same year to lecture on behalf of Czechoslovak national unity and against the autonomy of Slovakia.⁶⁰ Their mission, however, failed among Slovak American autonomists.⁶¹

Upon his return to Czechoslovakia in November of 1920, Jozef Rudinský's relationship with Andrej Hlinka deteriorated and they eventually parted company.⁶² As early as the beginning of 1923, Rudinský and Vavro Šrobár began to talk. These conversations were probably initiated by Šrobár, who was preparing for his own journey to the USA⁶³ in order to counteract the results of the 14th congress of the Slovak League of America.⁶⁴ Rudinský and Šrobár discussed Rudinský's planned new journey to America and concluded that the latter should use the contacts that he had made in his previous mission. They particularly counted upon Rudinský's past friendship with Jozef Hušek. To make his mission more successful, Rudinský decided to depart alone, without Šrobár. The latter would come after him and would finish what Rudinský had started.⁶⁵

Rudinský's and Šrobár's trips were intended to appear as two completely unrelated and independent initiatives. However, that same year bishop Vojtaššák was also preparing for his journey to the USA. Vojtaššák was not aware of Šrobár's and Rudinský's plans. If

⁵⁹ *Zápisnica XV. kongressu Slovenskej ligy vydrživaného v dňoch 27., 28. a 29. mája 1924, v Bennett Hoteli, Binghamton, N. Y. (Pittsburgh), 16-17, 20.*

⁶⁰ *Zápisnica schôdze Ústredného výboru s Ústrednou správou Slovenskej ligy v Amerike vydrživanej v dňoch 27. a 28. júna 1923 v budove Y.M.C.A., Cleveland, O., 14.*

⁶¹ Karol Sidor, *Andrej Hlinka (1864 – 1926)*, 504-505.

⁶² For a detailed analysis of their breakup see Letz, "Jozef Rudinský...", 334-337.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 337.

⁶⁴ Čulen, *Pittsburghská dohoda*, 383.

⁶⁵ Letz, "Jozef Rudinský...", 337.

he had gone, Vojtaššák would have certainly strengthened the position of Slovak Catholics in the USA, as well as that of his friend Andrej Hlinka and the whole autonomist movement. Therefore, Rudinský in his letters referring to Vojtaššák's planned journey to the USA, found it extremely undesirable. Upon his arrival in the USA, Rudinský wrote to Šrobár: "I was almost dejected by the news that Vojtaššák was already aboard ship and was about to arrive any day. If it is true, there is nothing left but to pack my bags and return home. I will be not able to counteract his influence."⁶⁶ Of course, bishop Vojtaššák was not aboard the ship *Majestic*, which was to arrive in the USA on July 6, 1923.⁶⁷ However, the information that came to Rudinský must have been based upon Vojtaššák's planned arrival in America. In New York City, a reception had been prepared on that day to which representatives of the city council were invited. A welcome committee consisting of Catholic priests must have blushed with shame when Vojtaššák did not arrive on the *Majestic*, nor on any other ships.⁶⁸

Thus, the main reason why the Czechoslovak authorities refused to grant bishop Vojtaššák a passport was political. The refusal had to do with the timing of his journey. It was planned at exactly the time when the Czechoslovak government was preparing to strike a decisive blow against the growing autonomist movement among American Slovaks. Vojtaššák's trip could have thwarted these plans. In addition, the Czechoslovak government harbored suspicions about Vojtaššák as a supporter of the Slovak People's Party. It feared that he would make use of his journey to raise funds for the Party just before municipal and county elections (September, 1923) were to take place. They also speculated that Vojtaššák's trip might have helped the *Ludová banka* [People's Bank], since it was in financial difficulty.⁶⁹

Slovak Catholics in the USA, on the other hand, looked upon Vojtaššák's trip as a pastoral journey, and not a political one. They pointed this out in their press. Bishop Vojtaššák had been invited by the Slovak Catholic Federation in America. The news of such a rude and offensive refusal to grant a passport to bishop Vojtaššák caused

⁶⁶ SNA, f. Vavro Šrobár, fold. 4. J. Rudinský to V. Šrobár, July 5, 1923.

⁶⁷ Letz, "Jozef Rudinský...", 337-338.

⁶⁸ Obrana, July 17, 1923, 4.

⁶⁹ Letz, "Biskup...", 45.

outrage among American Slovak Catholics. The Slovak Catholic Federation decided to call a meeting to discuss the affair and to take appropriate action. At this meeting, which was held in Pittsburgh on August 8, 1923, representatives of all Slovak American Catholic organizations, most of the clergy and Slovak American leaders resolved to send a complaint to the Congress of the Slovak Catholic Federation held in Lansford, PA, on October 9-11, 1923. At the Congress, the delegates unanimously decided to acquaint the world with the offensive step of Minister Malypeter and to launch an indictment against the President and government of the Czechoslovak Republic.⁷⁰

In response to the refusal to grant a passport to bishop Vojtaššák, the Slovak Catholic Federation issued a strong open letter addressed to the President of the Czechoslovak Republic T. G. Masaryk. In this letter, Slovak Catholics in America expressed their disappointment over the policies of both the President and government of Czechoslovakia, and even the sense of a threat to their national existence. Besides other matters, they pointed to the cause of bishop Ján Vojtaššák. They directly charged the Czechoslovak government with trying to assimilate the Slovaks and to promote the spiritual genocide of the Slovak nation.⁷¹

The open letter was sent to all representatives of the Allies, as well as to Bohemia and Slovakia.⁷² In Czechoslovakia, however, it

⁷⁰ *MÚA AV ČR, AÚTGM*, f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R - republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 459. *Otvorený List P. Tomášovi G. Masarykovi Prezidentovi Republiky Česko-Slovenskej (Sdruženie Slovenských Katolíkov v Amerike, 1923)*, 5-6.

⁷¹ *MÚA AV ČR, AÚTGM*, f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R - republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 459. *Otvorený List P. Tomášovi G. Masarykovi Prezidentovi Republiky Česko-Slovenskej (Sdruženie Slovenských Katolíkov v Amerike, 1923)*, 5, 8 – 9. The open letter was printed in Slovak (600 copies) and English (500 copies). For a copy of its English version see *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Letter of the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington, DC, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague, April 11, 1924. For its Slovak version see my “Dva otvorené listy prezidentovi Tomášovi G. Masarykovi,” in *Dejiny: internetový časopis Inštitútu histórie FF PU v Prešove*, 5 (No. 2, 2011), 79-82.

⁷² *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. „Otvorený list na Masaryka“. A clipping of the weekly *Jednota*, March 19, 1924. Milan Getting of the Consulate of the ČSR in Pittsburgh reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague that an English version of the open letter was sent particularly to the representatives of the Catholic Church in the USA, to editorial staffs of several American newspapers, to all leading Polish and Ruthenian newspapers and pastors, to university professors, as well as to the members of the foreign committee of the

was confiscated by the Czechoslovak authorities. First, the Ministry with Full Powers for the Administration of Slovakia in Bratislava prohibited the distribution of the letter through the mails and it was confiscated by the public prosecutor's office in Prague as well.⁷³ On behalf of all Slovak American Catholics, the Slovak Catholic Federation protested against this confiscation to the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington, DC. They referred to the confiscation as vandalism and a new insult to Slovak Catholics in America.⁷⁴

In their protest through the open letter, however, Slovak-American Catholics were not united. *Jednota* criticized the open letter. The editor considered it to be a tactical mistake. He declared the letter to be too radical and also criticized its timing.⁷⁵

In an effort to weaken the impact of the open letter of the Slovak Catholic Federation and to prove that views expressed in it belonged to a small number of American Slovaks, the intelligence department of the Czechoslovak Consulate General in New York agreed with the Rev. Klement Ihriský, a representative of American Slovaks in New York, to issue an "anti-letter" addressed to the President of Czechoslovakia.⁷⁶ This "anti-letter" was written by an official of the intelligence department. It was also issued in the form of brochure and sent to the same addresses as the open letter of the Slovak Catholic Federation.⁷⁷

Senate and Congress in Washington. In its Slovak version, the open letter was mostly sent to Prague to the members of Parliament.

⁷³ *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Attachment of the letter of the Ministry of the ČSR with Full Powers for the Administration of Slovakia in Bratislava to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague, February 12, 1924; *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Letter of the Ministry of the ČSR with Full Powers for the Administration of Slovakia in Bratislava to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague, February 27, 1924.

⁷⁴ *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Letter of the Slovak Catholic Federation to František Chvalkovský, Ambassador of the ČSR in Washington, DC, February 25, 1924.

⁷⁵ *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. „Otvorený list na Masaryka“. A clipping of the weekly *Jednota*, March 19, 1924.

⁷⁶ *MÚA AV ČR, AUTGM*, f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R - republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 460. An Open Letter to Thomas G. Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia, 6 pp.

⁷⁷ *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Letter of the Czechoslovak Consulate General in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague, April 7, 1924; Čulen, *Pittsburghská dohoda*, 383.

It should be apparent, therefore, that the main reason for which the Czechoslovak authorities refused to grant bishop Vojtaššák a passport was political. Moreover, the rude refusal may be explained by the timing of his journey. After World War I, Slovaks in America, represented by their cover organization the Slovak League, underwent several changes of opinion regarding political developments in the newly-established Czecho-Slovak Republic. On the one hand, they struggled to remain devoted to their program of the autonomy of Slovakia within the Czecho-Slovak Republic as expressed in the Pittsburgh Agreement. On the other hand, American Slovaks tried to remain neutral and not to get involved in the political infighting in Slovakia. With the personal metamorphosis of the president of the Slovak League of America, and with the Slovak League being hesitant concerning the matter of the autonomy promised by T. G. Masaryk in the Pittsburgh Agreement, Slovak Catholic organizations took the lead in the promotion of Slovak national demands after 1919. Due to the growing autonomist movement in Slovakia, as well as the activities of Anton Kompánek, the vice-president of the Slovak National Party, in the USA the 14th Congress of the Slovak League of America concentrated the autonomist forces and it eventually provoked the Czechoslovak government to try to deliver a decisive blow to the growing autonomist movement among American Slovaks in 1923.

In response to the refusal of the Czechoslovak authorities to grant a passport to bishop Vojtaššák, however, Slovak Catholics in America were not united. The scathing open letter (in stilted English) issued by the Slovak Catholic Federation was justifiably criticized by *Jednota*. To weaken the impact of this open letter and to try to prove that it represented only a small number of American Slovaks, the intelligence department of the Czechoslovak Consulate General in New York issued another open letter (in perfect English) addressed to the president of Czechoslovakia. It was typical of the machinations of the then Czechoslovak government that the "anti-letter" was written by an official of the intelligence department and not by American Slovaks.

APPENDIX I

Open Letter to
Thomas G. Masaryk
President of the Czechoslovak Republic.⁷⁸

Mr. Thomas G. Masaryk,
President of the Czechoslovak Republic,
Prague

Mr. President:

In a critical time when fate was about to decide the turn of the world war, you and those loyal to you exerted all that was in your power that the result of the struggle might turn out in our mutual favor. Your appearance among the American Slovaks ignited unprecedented enthusiasm--your knocking at the hearts of our people found animated response - and your appeal for our assistance was crowned with success. Brother embraced brother and on the brightened horizon of acquired freedom and brotherhood smiled the sun towards our happy future...

Permit us, Mr. President, to remind you of the enthusiasm and the jubilation with which our Slovak people welcomed you wherever you appeared among them, unfolded your plans before them and assured them of your most sincere intentions. Permit us to remind you of the sacrifices in money and in blood which later were the seal of our loyalty to a work so noble and so sacred.

The American Slovaks have kept their promise; we loyally stood, and to the present day, stand by your promise. Notwithstanding this, we note with some acerbity, for the past four years that your constituents who had sent you to us, and who cared so much for our alliance and our assistance never intended to fulfill that promise which they had placed into your mouth, and which you supported by this background in their name had promised. You came to us as an

⁷⁸ This English version is a copy of the open letter available in *AMZV ČR*, f. III. sekce MZV 1918 – 1939, i. no. 22, fold. 650. Letter of the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington, DC, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ČSR in Prague, April 11, 1924. For the Slovak version see my “Dva otvorené listy prezidentovi Tomášovi G. Masarykovi,” in *Dejiny: internetový časopis Inštitútu histórie FF PU v Prešove*, 5 (No. 2, 2011), 79-82.

equal to equals; that was the way we associated with you and that was the way we drafted plans for the future with you. Not without our assistance, not without the efforts of the American Slovaks did you accomplish the fulfillment of your life's dreams - the liberation of the Czech Nation.

Would we were not compelled to admit to you before the world that only (the liberation) of the Czech Nation; for the Slovak Nation, as a contrahent (contracting party) primarily recognized by you in the building of that republic at the head of which you now stand, does not feel under your aegis free in the sense of freedom as an independent nation has the right to vindicate for itself, particularly in the present epoch of self determination of nations.

We have patiently waited for four years, whether the conscience of those cliques will move which had forced themselves upon us as brother, but today they treat us in stepmother fashion, nay, even like slaves. We see ourselves step by step betrayed, sold not only by compatriots of your strain and feelings, by your Government, but also by our own weaker compatriots, who for economic considerations lured into an invisible net of imperialistic aspirations, renounced openly that which is to every nation and even to us "ignorant" Slovaks inviolable, priceless, sacred. They are Slovak "Sviha's" pure and simple.

While dwelling among us you spoke to us in the voice of a brother, plain and without bombast which is bountifully at the disposal of people of your profession. Today we desire to tell you in the same simple and plain manner that the Slovaks not only feel disappointed in you and in the Government of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, but directly endangered in their national existence.

We do not desire to remind you of the recent acts by means of which the Government of the Czecho-Slovak Republic beyond any doubt manifested its desire of absorption respectively extermination of the Slovaks as a nation. These facts are sufficiently well known to you. We will show you the last incident which hardly has its parallel in the history of states which are only in the transitory stage of an experiment in democracy--an incident which startles any one who has sense for culture and democracy. Following the noble representatives of the World Powers there also came to America during the last few years representatives of the various religious denominations, in order to strengthen their adherents in their ways in which they de-

sire to reach eternal well-being in the post-terrestrial realm. What was more natural, but that also the Catholic Slovaks in America desired to welcome in their midst some one of these dignitaries with whom Rome has honored us after the revolution not without efforts on the part of your Government.

The incident of Bishop Vojtaššák is known to you (and how could it not be) whom we had invited here as our guest; from whom we expected good not only for ourselves, and for our church, but also for the welfare of your Republic.

And here the system of government of the Czecho-Slovak republic showed up in its ugly and horrible nudity!

Mr. President, the American Slovak Catholics identify themselves with the incident of Bishop Vojtassak. Your government has culminated by it the climax of its repressions, wrongfully committed for fully four years on Slovakia and the Slovaks. The refusal of a passport by your Minister caused such bitterness among us that we would be unworthy of our name and of our Credo, were we not to protest against it most emphatically. The Federation of Slovak Catholics called a council meeting to Pittsburgh which was held on August 8th, and at which the representatives of all Catholic organizations, a large number of Clergy and prominent exponents resolved to submit this grievance to the Congress of this Federation which was held on the days from the 9th to the 11th of October 1923, in Lansford, Pa., where we unanimously resolved to acquaint the educated world particularly with this outrage of your Minister and also submit to the world Powers and the leading representatives the following COMPLAINT against you and your Government.

If you, as president of the Czecho-Slovak Republic according to law, are not responsible for your acts to the state authorities--and if your government does not honor your promise and your signature as President of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, then we are taking you to task as a gentleman for that piece of cultural piracy which your Government and your ministers are committing on our Slovak nation from the first hour of the revolution--at the same time demanding from you as a gentleman to acknowledge and fulfill that which you had promised to us, the American Slovaks.

This right we abrogate to ourselves as one of the parties contracting with you in the building of the Czecho-Slovak Republic.

We are lodging this complaint against you and against your former factors in Paris before the conclusion of peace and after it, of having misled the peace delegates and the whole world in general, by claiming that the Czechs and Slovaks are one nation. To such a statement we Slovaks object most emphatically. This erroneous opinion of your Government was upset even by the Czech Academy, and prominent historians are convinced of its fallacy. For this reason do we, the American Slovak Catholics request that the respective provisions at Paris-Versailles and Trianon, be revised.

We are lodging against you a complaint, for breach of contract entered into between us and you as president of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, and contained in the so-called Pittsburgh Pact, the value of which you now disavow, bagatellize-on the fulfillment of which, however, we insist ascribing to it the significance of a National Bill of Rights.

We complain against you and your Government for the undemocratic, unrepublican persecutions of newspapers of our party alignment and that of the opposition parties, which are not pulling the cart of Czecho-imperialistic aspirations, and which stand firmly by the principle that the Slovaks are an autochthone nation.

We accuse you and your Government of the confiscation of Catholic institution[s]-of the forcing of textbooks offensive to Catholics into the primary and higher schools, of the open favorizing of individuals and societies whose aims are the undermining of the Catholic spirit in our people.

We complain against you and your Government before the civilized world for that barbarian monstrosity which you have sanctioned and which under the name "A law for the protection of the Republic" destroys the idea of democracy; which in reality exists [to silence us, the Slovaks, forever], and is, in our opinion, a cancerous growth upon the body of the Republic.

We complain against you and your Government for the so-called "County Reform" so much lauded by you, which is equivalent to shackles for Slovakia as a national unit, which is white in Bohemia and black in Slovakia, and which impoverishes us economically and culturally, exposing us to the chicaneries of your centralist officials.

For these and similar undeniable facts, we, American Slovak Catholics are accusing you and your Government before the world for the reason that the censorship (o, democracy, o republic,

o enlightened twentieth century of progress and free thought), the censorship of your Government does not permit in Slovakia a single manifestation of opposition against this madly raving autocracy by means of which your conscienceless compatriots and political adventurers keep Slovakia shackled.

If the saying is correct that history repeats itself, let us be permitted to remind you that the entire Czech nation on one occasion resisted the Habsburgs for the reason that Francis Joseph did not keep the promise once made to the Czechs. You gave him the epithet of a perjurer-and that rightly so, and that regardless of the fact whether his promises were only "of historic value" or not. And we do not blame you or your adherents, that you built the foundations of the Republic on these unfulfilled promises of your former "sovereign". But now, out of consideration for this repetition in history, please do not forget, together with your Government, that "quod uni justum, alteri aequum"--what you had disliked in your oligarchs, that we are not obliged to like either and that the "Camarilla of Prague" directly compels the Slovaks to repay you and your regime in equal coin, if you should not desist in your anti-Slovak and anti-Catholic intentions, and should refuse to give the Slovaks that to which they are entitled.

And the consequences? Let Prague be responsible for them--you Mr. President, and your Government.

Mr. President, you know well, just as we do that powerful enemies of our young state are carrying on a propaganda in foreign countries that the Czecho-Slovak Republic is neither a natural state, nor a logical national, geographical, or resting upon a historical foundation; that it inherited all the weak points of the defunct monarchy, without having acquired one single good quality. Would there not be a necessity for internal unity, an internal understanding in accordance with your own motto "democracy is a discussion"? In opposition to this you with your Government, or that Government under your protection hamper and destroy even the slightest manifestation where the emphasizing of our national individuality is concerned.

We, the Slovak Catholics in America, identify ourselves with the fate of our brethren across the ocean and the wrongs committed on them are also our wrongs, as Slovaks as well as Catholics; therefore, the disregard shown to Bishop Vojtaššák affected us in a twofold manner. Your Government kicked him both for being a bishop (of

course, a Catholic) and for being a patriotic Slovak who looks Prague straight in the eyes. And this double insult had for its consequence that also a preponderating majority of patriotic American Slovaks of other denominations joined our ranks, as brothers who are feeling with us our national wrong and our national disregard.

What Prague has dared to do against us during the past four years, and what it recently dared to do with Bishop Vojtaššák, would have ignited a scandal even among other nations; in our opinion it is so much greater, because you, Mr. President, instead of realizing the unprovoked insult and without regard to the abuse of jurisdiction of your minister, whose trammeling of the personal liberty of a free citizen exceeds all conceptions of democracy and humanity, whom you, as if trying to mock us, still tolerate in office.

Of course, we admit that under the stress of circumstances, we Slovak Catholics cannot demand satisfaction from people whose life motto it had been "to square accounts with Rome", whose "programme is Tabor", who are provoking us that we should struggle for what we desire to preserve by right of heritage as Catholics, and as a deceived party of honest contrahents we cannot even demand it, but closing the list of our incriminations we solemnly declare to you, to your Government, and we shall not cease declaring to the whole world in spite of the opposing views of your regime that just as we are praying with our Catholic-Slovak brethren beneath the Tatra Mountains for the welfare of the young republic which had been won by our common sacrifices of blood, we wish you would take notice with your Government, and all its competent officials, that we are Slovaks, a self existing nation, homogenous and autochthone in origin and culture, as well as in history and language; that we desire to remain such without any artificial intermixture. Should the Czecho-Slovak Government hinder us in this either directly or indirectly, and not stop the wrongs cited in the above complaints--even if we were not able at once to put up against every "Metternich," "Bach," or "Schmerling" from Prague a Slovak "Palacky," "Rieger," or "Brauner," we shall yet find means and ways for the revelation of our wrongs; but we hope at the same time that God who will not let perish a nation trusting in Him, will awaken new "Viators" who will inform the world of our subjugated condition and that He will enthuse more "Björnson[s]" who will tell you and your Czecho-Slovak

Government such truths as you would least like to hear in this highly delicate situation.

By authorization of the Slovak Catholic Federation in America,

JOHN B. PASTORAK, Secretary,
Schenectady, N. Y.

ANDREW PAVLIS, President,
Sheppton, Pa.

APPENDIX II

An Open Letter to
Thomas G. Masaryk,
President of Czechoslovakia⁷⁹

MR. PRESIDENT:

SOME time ago the Slovak Catholic Federation in America issued an Open Letter, addressed to you and signed by Father John B. Pastorak and Father Andrew Pavlis, in which complaints are being raised against you and your Government. A spirit of narrow sectarianism lurks behind every line of the Open Letter. You, Mr. President, and your Government are accused of desiring to "exterminate the Slovaks as a nation," of "cultural piracy," of having "misled the peace delegates," of "breach of faith," etc. In order that you may not have an erroneous idea as to the feelings and views of the American Slovaks, we, the undersigned, representatives of Slovak organizations in America, desire to point out that the Slovak Catholic Federation in America represents a very small part of our compatriots, and that the great majority of the American Slovaks are heart and soul with you.

⁷⁹ Originally published in English, this open letter is available in *MÚA AV ČR, AÚTGM*, f. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, R - republika 1918 – 1937, fold. 460. An Open Letter to Thomas G. Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia, 6 pp.

Under your able leadership the Czechoslovak Republic has been most successful in piloting itself through the dangerous postwar period and it has been consolidated to such an extent that today it may be classed among the most ordered and prosperous States of Europe. In Slovakia, especially, great progress has been made as regards both cultural and economic development. We, therefore, are at a loss to understand the unjustified complaints made by the above-mentioned Slovak Catholic Federation against you and your Government.

Permit us, Mr. President, to draw your attention to some of these complaints. The writers maintain that the Slovaks are "directly endangered in their national existence." How can this statement be reconciled with the progress which Slovakia has made in educational matters? As you are no doubt aware, under the Magyar regime all schools, whether elementary, secondary, or high schools, were in the hands of the Magyars. Properly speaking, there were no Slovak schools at all, with the exception of a few schools where the work was carried on by a handful of teachers who were evangelical for the greater part, the instruction was Magyar both in letter and spirit. To-day, there are over four thousand elementary schools, over fifty secondary schools, besides commercial and technical institutes, and a university at Bratislava.

The educational progress made since the liberation of Slovakia certainly does not prove the statement that the Slovaks are "endangered in their national existence." On the contrary, it proves, that the national existence and the cultural development of the Slovaks within the Czechoslovak Republic is fully assured.

The Slovaks have three ministers in the Government and many officials in all branches of civil service. In certain cases, owing to lack of competent officials among the Slovaks, it was necessary to send Czechs to Slovakia but these are being withdrawn as soon as the Slovaks are able to fill these places with their own officials. There are, however, no proofs that Slovakia has been treated in "step-mother fashion," nor do the writers offer any proofs of their vague generalization.

The writers "object most emphatically" to the statement alleged to have been made by the Czechoslovak delegates at the Paris Peace Conference to the effect that the "Czechs and Slovaks are one nation". Assuming that this statement has really been made we should like to point out that we, too, are of the same opinion. Moreover, we

may add that Father Hlinka, the leader of the Slovak Autonomists, himself held, and probably still holds, the same view. On May 4th, 1908, he made the following declaration before the Magyar court at Bratislava: "It will remain an eternal truth that we Slovaks are one stock, one culture, one nation with the Czechs, and up to quite recent times we had a language in common with the Czechs, and up to this day our evangelical ministers make use of the Czech language in their church service." And it was the same Father Hlinka who, on October 30, 1918, cordially associated himself with the manifesto of the Slovak nation which contains the following words: "In language, culture and historical traditions the Slovak nation forms a part of the single Czechoslovak nation."

It may be disputed whether – from a strictly historical and ethnographical point of view – the Slovaks and Czechs are one nation or not. Their feeling and consciousness, however, is the deciding factor. If the Slovaks and Czechs feel themselves as one nation, no historian or ethnographer can alter that feeling or consciousness.

The writers accuse you, Mr. President, of "breach of contract" known as the "Pittsburgh Agreement." As regards this agreement which was arrived at between the American Czechs and Slovaks on May 30, 1918, we should like to point out in how far the provisions of this agreement have been carried out. For this purpose we are giving on one side the text of the Pittsburgh Agreement and on the other what has been done:

1. We accept the political program providing for a union of Czechs and Slovaks in an independent State composed of the Czech territories and Slovakia.

1. Carried out

2. Slovakia will have its own administration, its diet and its courts.

2. In accordance with the Constitution the whole Republic is divided into 20 autonomous regions, 6 of which comprise Slovakia. These regions are administered by the Slovaks themselves by means of autonomous bodies containing about 40 members who are elected by the vote of all citizens,

irrespective of sex, on a system of proportional representation. These zones thus have all the attributes of democratic local autonomy. From the representative bodies is elected an administrative council for the whole of Slovakia, also by proportional representation. This council is composed of 24 members, 8 of whom, under the presidency of Slovak administration, attend to the executive authority for Slovakia.

3. Slovak will be official language in schools, administration and in public life.

3. Both Czech and Slovak are official languages throughout the territory of the Republic.

4. The Czechoslovak State will be a Republic and its constitution will be democratic.

4. Carried out.

5. The organization of the co-operation between the Czechs and Slovaks in the United States will, according to the needs and to the changed situation, be broadened and regulated.

5. Left to be carried out by the American Slovaks and Czechs.

6. Concrete details concerning the administration of the Czechoslovak State are left to the liberated Czechs and Slovaks and their duly elected representatives.

6. In accordance with this provision the present status of Slovakia (see article 2 of the agreement) has been elaborated.

You will observe, Mr. President, that as a matter of fact the Pittsburgh Agreement has been substantially carried out. The aim of this agreement was to assure the future status and cultural development of Slovakia within the Czechoslovak State, and this aim has been achieved.

The Czechoslovak Republic is the result of the work of both the Slovaks and Czechs. During the war neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks demanded self-determination for each separately; they deman-

ded self-determination for the Czechoslovaks. Hence the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic and of the Czechoslovak Nation. We, in America, are watching the development of events in Czechoslovakia very closely and we are not unmindful of the great progress the Republic has made. We are especially aware of the fact that your untiring efforts have in no small measure contributed to this progress. The good name of the Czechoslovak Republic abroad has been established, above all, by your indefatigable work and by the work of your able collaborator, the Foreign Minister, Dr. Benes. On behalf of the American Slovaks we thank you most heartily for your labor which has given to Slovakia her due place among the free nations of the world. We beg you to continue in your endeavors to make of Slovakia a happy land such as we have dreamt of while fighting in common for Czechoslovakia's freedom and national independence.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of our highest esteem and respect.

JOHN KRAFCIK, President National Slovak Society.

JOHN DVORSCAK, Secretary National Slovak Society.

JOHN ZEMAN, President Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol.

FRANK OSLISLO, Secretary Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol.

FRANK STAS, Treasurer Slovak League of America.

JOHN MATLOCHA, President Western Assembly District of the Slovak League.

JOHN L. ZAROVY, Secretary Western Assembly District of the Slovak League.

NICHOLAS KOVAC, President District Assembly New England States of the Slovak League.

STEPHEN ERHARDT, Secretary District Assembly New England States of the Slovak League.

CLEMENT IHRISKY, President New York District Assembly of the Slovak League.

JOSEPH JANCEK, Secretary New York District Assembly of the Slovak League.

JOSEPH JOSCAK, Editor *New Yorkský Denník*

FRANK CELKO, Editor *Slovenský Sokol*

STEPHEN HUSKA, Editor *Nové Časy*

AN UNWELCOME GUEST: MILAN HODŽA IN AMERICAN DOCUMENTS BETWEEN 1941 AND 1944

Roman Ličko

In December of 1938 Milan Hodža, a Slovak politician and the last prime minister of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic, went into exile in France. There, along with Štefan Osuský, another Slovak statesman and diplomat, he became the leading figure of Slovak democratic exiles before the outbreak of WW II.¹ Towards the end of 1939 Hodža established the Slovak National Council, which, under his auspices, was reorganized in early 1940 into the Czecho-Slovak National Council. Both political bodies subscribed to the democratic ideals of pre-war Czechoslovakia, as well as to the belief in a continuation of Czechoslovak statehood.² However, in stark

¹Before Hodža's arrival in Paris in November of 1939, Ambassador Štefan Osuský had been the leading figure of the Czechoslovak resistance movement operating from France. His greatest achievement was the signing of the Franco-Czechoslovak Agreement concerning the creation of a new Czechoslovak army in France by which the French government recognised *de facto* the continued existence of the Czechoslovak Republic. During this period Osuský and Hodža shared similar ideas about Slovakia's future. They both unequivocally supported the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia. However, they strongly opposed the centralism of the inter-war Prague governments. Osuský favoured a federal constitutional arrangement between Czechs and Slovaks. Hodža spoke of a self-governing Slovakia within a restored 'Czecho-Slovakia'. Osuský maintained close contact with Hodža, who was, at that time, in London. The two men even cooperated in the preparation of a memorandum of Slovak demands in the lead-up to the establishment of the Beneš-led Czechoslovak National Committee in France. Interestingly enough, Osuský did not become a member of any of the resistance organizations established by Hodža after his arrival in Paris. For more on the Hodža-Osuský co-operation during this period see Slavomír Michálek, "Hodža a Osuský, názory a pozície v rokoch 1939–1941," in *Milan Hodža – štátnik a politik*, ed. M. Pekník et. al. (Bratislava: Veda, 2002), 301–18.

²This paper uses the more widely accepted spellings 'Czechoslovakia' and 'Czechoslovak'. In reference to Hodža's ideas, however, the spellings 'Czecho-Slovakia' and 'Czecho-Slovak' have been retained as these were the forms preferred by Hodža himself. The Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920 adopted the unhyphenated spelling of the name. In November of 1938 the country officially returned to the hyphenated spelling 'Czecho-Slovakia' in recognition of the fact that Slovakia had been declared an autonomous region. The use of the one name or the other, by both Czechs and Slovaks throughout the war, had political connotations. Generally speaking, the Slovaks who favoured the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia after WW II but op-

opposition to Edward Beneš, the leading figure of the Czech democratic exiles, Hodža advocated a thoroughly decentralized model of a new Czechoslovak constitutional arrangement, with self-governing status for Slovakia. After the failure to find common ground on this issue with Beneš, who consistently refused to allow any political representation of Slovak federalists in his exile government-to-be, Hodža moved to London. The German occupation of France in the summer of 1940 and the ensuing Battle of Britain in September of 1940 speeded up Britain's recognition of Beneš's government-in-exile. Feeling powerless and marginalised, Hodža saw no purpose in participating in any government headed by Beneš. By the autumn of 1941 he decided to leave Britain and in October of that year he arrived in the United States. There he pursued two political objectives: he intended to convince politically-minded Slovak Americans to support his programme of a self-governing Slovakia within a restored Czechoslovakia. Concurrently, he attempted to lobby the Roosevelt administration to throw its weight behind the creation of a federation of Central European states. This paper, which draws primarily on research in United States government archives, attempts to trace Hodža's political campaign among Slovak Americans from the point of view of the Roosevelt administration. At the same time, it follows Hodža's efforts to engage the American government in a dialogue concerning a comprehensive post-war peace settlement in Central Europe. With the help of secondary literature on the subject, the study assesses the success of these attempts, and how they were viewed by the chief foreign policy makers in the Roosevelt administration.³

posed the pre-war unitary constitutional arrangement between the two nations preferred the hyphenated designation.

³ The first attempt to document the activities of Milan Hodža in the USA was made by his close associate, Michal Múdry Šebík, in his book *Milan Hodža v Amerike*. (Chicago :Geringer Press, Inc., 1949). The author published a number of articles in the periodicals of Slovak democratic exiles in the USA after WW II, e.g. Michal Múdry, "Svedectvo historickej doby. Bullitovo a Hodžovo memorandum," *Naše snahy*, 6, no. 9 (May – June 1970). In 1965 Susan Mikula, an American of Slovak descent, wrote a dissertation on Hodža's activities in the USA. However, it was not until 1992, at a conference in Bratislava, that she presented her work in Slovakia: Susan Mikula, "Dr. Milan Hodža vo svetle archívnych dokumentov z archívov v USA," in: *Milan Hodža – štátnik a politik*, ed. M. Pekník et. al. (Bratislava: Veda, 2002), 345–50. Czech historians have also dealt with Hodža's stay in the USA. For instance J. Kuklík and J. Němeček, *Hodža versus Beneš. Milan Hodža a slovenská otázka v zahraničnom odboji za druhé svetové války* (Praha: Karolinum, 1999). The most comprehensive account yet of Hodža's political activities in the USA., including some views of the Roosevelt administration, was written by the late Slovak historian Pavol Lukáč, "Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu v emigrácii v USA a reakcie na jeho federalistické plány," *Historický časopis* 51, no. 4 (2003), pp. 497– 515. As Lukáč himself observed, however, Kuklík's and Němeček's book only traced

Apart from the Slovak League of America (hereafter SLA), which favoured independence for Slovakia, there was no other Slovak organization in the USA in 1941 that had a clear idea about Slovakia's political future after the war.⁴ The leaders of the opposition organization – the Slovak National Alliance (hereafter SNA) – stuck to the policy of a reinstated Czechoslovakia, but were unwilling to commit themselves to negotiating a more specific settlement on this issue. In line with the official policy of President Edvard Beneš, they maintained that Slovakia's future should be resolved after the war by a democratic vote. Despite their uncommitted attitude, Slovakia's political future was as sensitive an issue among the individual leaders of the SNA as it was for the leadership of the SLA. As long as there was no political leader in the United States who was able to offer a political alternative to the League-promulgated Slovak independence, the issue was bound to remain unresolved.

This situation changed after the arrival of Milan Hodža in the United States in October of 1941. During the three years of his American stay, Hodža devoted his energies to political campaigning and lobbying. Like Slovak-American leaders, he too wanted to influence the attitudes of the Roosevelt administration towards Slovakia. As a former Czechoslovak statesman, Hodža had access to the United States Department of State. He was allowed to discuss the Slovak question with high-ranking government officials. Hodža's political campaign in the USA aroused the interest of the American media, as well as that of federal authorities. Right up to his death in 1944, his activities were closely followed by the Office of Strategic Services (hereafter OSS) and its subordinate department, the Foreign Nationalities Branch (hereafter FNB).

Hodža's arrival in the United States generated interest, not only among Slovak Americans, but also in the American media. Almost immediately, a number of speculative pieces about Hodža's political objectives appeared in

Hodža's political campaign in the USA on the basis of secondary archival materials left by Hodža's contemporaries, and not from the documents of the U.S. Department of State. The present study draws upon the following primary sources: 1. an independent investigation of the documents of the Department of State; 2. the hitherto unpublished documents of the Office of Strategic Services and its subordinate department – the Foreign Nationalities Branch (both housed in the National Archives in Washington), the archival documentation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (released to the author under the Freedom of Information – Privacy Acts); and 3. the documents issued by the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy collected and published by Polish historians Jozef Łaptos and Marius Misztal in 2002.

⁴ For the activities of the Slovak League of America on behalf of Slovak independence during and after the war, see M. Mark Stolarik, "The Slovak League of America and the Canadian Slovak League in the Struggle for the Self-Determination of the Nation, 1907-1992," *Slovakia* 39, nos. 72-73 (2007), 19-34.

the press. One OSS report from 1942 read that the former Czechoslovak prime minister had come as a private citizen.⁵ Hodža himself said that the main reason for his arrival was for reasons of health. In the USA he planned to undergo a series of medical treatments.⁶ This is well attested in the Hodža family correspondence of the period.⁷ On the other hand, the former Czechoslovak prime minister did hope to achieve in the United States some well-defined political goals.⁸ In his first interview with *The New York Times*, Hodža stated that he intended to “test out American opinion regarding Central Europe” and, at the same time, he wanted to “inform it of the trend of opinion there.”⁹ Not all American media reported on Hodža’s intentions impartially. On November 7, the Overseas News Agency issued a press release which assessed Hodža’s pre-war political career in an unflattering light. According to this source, Hodža’s Agrarian Party was only a little less reactionary than the pro-fascist Hlinka Guard in Slovakia. The release went on to claim that Hodža’s arrival also shed a negative light on Slovak Americans. The authors of the release dubbed their political mindset as “isolationist and pro-fascist,” referring to some of the Slovak fraternal press in America as evidence.¹⁰ It is clear that the primary motivation of the author must have been to damage Hodža’s political reputation. According to

⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Washington D. C., OSS, RG 226 E 100, Box 3, p. 61. This information was acquired by the OSS from the *New York Times* interview with Hodža conducted by Frederick T. Birchall.

⁶M. Múdry, Hodža’s associate in America, later wrote: “An American journalist who visited and interviewed Hodža claimed that in response to the question about his plans Hodža took out a bottle of medication and said that what he wanted, first and foremost, was a recovery.” Múdry, *Milan Hodža v Amerike...*, 20.

⁷ John Palka, Milan Hodža’s grandson, mentions two bouts of pneumonia that his grandfather suffered from shortly after his arrival. See John Palka, *Moje Slovensko, moja rodina* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2010), 57.

⁸Kuklík and Němeček argue: “It cannot be ruled out that the former Prime Minister could have been driven by his effort to shore up support among his expatriates – especially Slovak Americans, with whom he could attempt, with new energy, to stage a comeback in the Czechoslovak resistance movement abroad. So far his departure was seen, perhaps with some oversimplification, as his resignation to the attempts to advance his Slovak national programme in emigration,” *Hodža versus Beneš...*, 142. The view that Hodža sought the leading position in the resistance is also supported by Lukáč, “Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu v emigrácii ...”, 605.

⁹ *The New York Times*, December 7, 1941.

¹⁰Kuklík and Němeček quote from Overseas News Agency release No. 400, July 11, 1941: “Hodža’s presence sheds light on the political tendencies of Slovak Americans. Apparently, the majority of Slovaks living in the United States are isolationist and pro-fascist and this has been reflected in the Slovak press here as well.” The Czech authors say that Hodža sued the ONA for libel, claiming \$600,000 in damages, *Hodža versus Beneš...*, 144.

Hodža's close associate in the USA, Michal Múdry, unfounded attacks like these were frequent and their authors were mainly Slovak-American Communists, supported by Czechoslovak authorities in the USA.¹¹ The sources of the anti-Hodža campaign remain obscure. We contend, however, that for President Beneš and his government-in-exile, Hodža's presence in the country posed a serious political problem. The main reason was that Hodža was determined to call on Slovak Americans to actively participate in the discussions about the future of Slovakia.

The Roosevelt administration's attitudes towards Hodža's political activities were shaped gradually and drew upon several sources. One of them was Hodža himself. Almost immediately after his arrival, the former Czechoslovak prime minister made contact with the Department of State, and during his stay visited it several times. It can be argued that Hodža was the only Slovak who discussed the Slovak question with United States government officials during WW II. From its inception in the summer of 1942, the OSS kept an eye on Hodža's activities, and from December of that year his political campaign was scrutinized by the officers of the FNB. The OSS analysed Hodža's activities by scanning his articles in the Slovak-American media, as well as in the American press in general. In addition to that, Hodža attracted the close attention of the FBI, which since 1940 had been investigating the activities of the Slovak League and the Slovak National Alliance. All the sources at the U.S. government's disposal indicated that Hodža pursued very specific political objectives in the United States. Sometime around mid-1942, an OSS report noted that: "Dr. Hodža's visits to the State Department, his public speeches, interviews granted by him, and his article in *The Nation* (May 16, 1942) have demonstrated his willingness to express his ideas, whatever may be the extent of his actual political activity."¹²

Hodža's approach to the Slovak question differed from all other political plans which had been discussed among Slovak Americans to date. The crucial difference was that in Hodža's view, the Slovak question was not to be solved in isolation, but as part of the security, economic and strategic

¹¹ "Various groups, more or less under the influence of leftist elements and the Czechoslovak Information Service, take pot shots at Hodža and where possible, in connection with his person, they attack Slovak Americans as well. These groups are often made up of the active Czech and Slovak communists such as Hoffmeister, Weisskopf Benau [a social democrat – author's note] and others, at that time undoubtedly under the influence and in favour with Czechoslovak authorities in America." According to Múdry, the most malicious attack upon Hodža was the pamphlet entitled "Persona non grata". It contained a scathing criticism of Hodža's efforts to create a federation, which, among other things, was to constitute a buffer against the Russian Bolsheviks. See Múdry, *Milan Hodža v Ameriike...*, 37.

¹² NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, RG 226 E 100, Box 3, p. 47.

issues concerning the whole of Central Europe. At that time, Hodža's ideas and political thought may have been known to the public as well as the OSS from his book *Federation in Central Europe*.¹³ Hodža was convinced that federation was the only political arrangement capable of harnessing national forces while preserving the freedom of nations and of individuals. Federation would enable Central Europe to become a viable system of production and consumption on the basis of which a New Europe could be built. The liberated and reinstated countries of Central Europe would conclude a treaty that would become the basic framework for a federal constitution. The treaty was supposed to be the result of spontaneous decisions made by Central European countries, which, bearing in mind their common goals, would identify common interests and mutual commitments. Powers concerning mutual affairs were to be delegated to federal bodies, and their exercise entrusted to a federal government.¹⁴ It would be headed by a federal Chancellor, who would be nominated by the President of the federation. The legislative body would be made up of a federal Congress, which was to oversee the legislative process as well as the federal budget. The Federal Court was to be the highest judicial body, which would decide on matters raised by the federal government or by the governments of the constituent countries.

The federalization of Central Europe was envisaged as the key to solving the Slovak question and Slovak-Czech relations. Hodža believed that the freedom and security of small nations could be guaranteed only through a supranational federation. If small states were to merge their sovereignties, thereby creating a stronger unit, it would clearly mean more to them than to be in permanent danger of losing their sovereignties. Slovakia, however, was not to enter the Central European federation as a separate state. According to Hodža, the political coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks was not only feasible, but also inevitable. For Czechs, Slovakia represented an important connection with Central Europe. Self-government would satisfy Slovakia to the extent that it would never be a source of weakness for the new republic, but the reverse – it would become the source of its stability and strength. However, Hodža warned, certain mistakes from the past should be avoided. "Stubborn centralism as well as mischievous separatism have to disappear," he argued. Hodža did not support Slovak independence and never sympathized with the representatives of the Slovak regime at home. In his book, he unequivocally dissociated himself from the "Slovakian Quisling régime"

¹³*Federation in Central Europe* (London and New York: Jarrolds Publishers, 1942).

¹⁴Hodža proposed the creation of the following federal ministries: 1. finance, 2. International trade, 3. foreign affairs, 4. defence, 5. postal services and communications, 6. and 7. air and naval transport, 8. federal legislation, 9. federal cooperation. *Federation in Central Europe...*, 172 – 7.

and made it clear that its political representatives did not represent the will of the people. As far as the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London was concerned, Hodža claimed he respected it and was willing to cooperate with it. In his opinion, though, the real leaders of the Slovaks existed not only in London, but also in the USA. He was convinced that in the settling of the Slovak question, Slovak Americans should take an active part. By emphasising the importance of Slovak Americans, Hodža underlined how much hope he pinned on them in deciding the political future of Slovakia after the war.¹⁵

Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Hodža presented his vision to the American press. On December 7, 1941 *The New York Times* published an interview with him entitled "Hope Put in Union of Central Europe," which the former Czechoslovak statesman had granted to American journalist Frederick T. Birchall. The subheading of the article informed the American reader that federation was the goal of 110 million Central Europeans.¹⁶ In the introduction, the author informed the reader that Hodža arrived in the USA unofficially, but with the approval of the Czechoslovak government in London. In fact, the second part of this statement was not true. President Beneš could not prevent Hodža from leaving for the United States, but he was far from pleased with the prospect of his greatest political rival in exile campaigning among Slovak Americans. In the Birchall interview Hodža outlined some of the constitutional mechanisms of the proposed federation, and expressed his conviction that the prevailing political tendency in exile was "wholly in the direction of such a federation." As proof, Hodža pointed to the recent rapprochement of two old foes – Czechoslovakia and Poland.¹⁷ These two countries, he believed, should form the nucleus of the future federation. It should then be joined by Romania, and subsequently also by a democratized Hungary, provided that the latter gave up its "imperialistic policy of coercing non-Magyar regions." According to

¹⁵ "Most of the Slovak leaders now stay in this country [United Kingdom] and in the USA." Hodža, *Federation in Central Europe...*, 94.

¹⁶ The other two subheadings read: "For Common Government" and "He Explains Plan Will Not Deal in Half Measures, Such as the Old Little Entente," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1941.

¹⁷ Hodža alluded here to the Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations of a possible confederation between the exiled governments of both countries in London. The outcome of these negotiations, which took place between 1940 and 1942, were two joint declarations – one in November 11, 1940 and the other on January 23, 1942. The negotiations did not, however, lead to any specific action. In 1943 they ended for good as a result of the new pro-Soviet orientation of Czechoslovak foreign policy, as well as Moscow's negative attitude towards such a confederation. For details see, Piotr S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940 – 1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).

Hodža, Yugoslavs and Bulgarians had already been working out their own idea of a federation. Hodža touched on the issue of the relations of Central Europe with Germany and Russia. He considered Russian Bolshevism as great a threat to Europe as German fascism. That was also the reason why the proposed federation should act as “a barrier between Nazi ideologists and Russian Bolsheviks.”¹⁸ Peasants, representing the conservative values of Central Europe, would, according to Hodža, be a stabilising force in the proposed federation. Their conservative influence would be of significant importance, since it would be necessary to “maintain a conservative democratic entity between the two subversive influences of Nazism and Bolshevism”.

Having talked to some lower-level officials of the U.S. Department of State, Hodža met Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle on December 9, 1941.¹⁹ On the same day Hodža dined informally with DeWitt C. Poole, a high-ranking OSS officer and future head of the Foreign Nationalities Branch.²⁰ During his meeting with the Assistant Secretary, Hodža presented Berle with a memorandum in which he outlined the development of Slovak affairs in Czechoslovakia and in subsequent exile between 1918 and 1939.²¹ In the memorandum, Hodža pointed out that the Czechoslovak Cabinet in 1938, under his premiership, approved proposed legislation on decentralization – which, among other things, granted Slovakia its regional parliament. That was the last valid legal arrangement made before the Munich Pact, and it was recognized even by Ján Lichner, a minister of the exiled government. This view, Hodža claimed, was subscribed to by the absolute majority of public opinion in Slovakia in late 1939. He admits that later on, in Paris, Czechoslovak leaders agreed that such constitutional issues as Slovakia's

¹⁸ Quoting Hodža, the author goes on to say: “With a solid bloc of 100, 000, 000 people separating them, a successful democracy operating next door would be a continuing object lesson of a better and more profitable way of life.” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1941.

¹⁹ Prior to the meeting with Berle, Hodža held talks with C. W. Cannon and H. Hoskins, as well as the head of the Coordination of Information, William J. Donovan. NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01/429-3/4, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944. Memorandum of conversation between M. Hodža and A. Berle (author H. Hoskins), December 9, 1941.

²⁰ According to Kuklík and Němeček, Hodža maintained that his first visit to the Department of State was a response to an invitation by C. W. Cannon, R. Atherton and A. Berle. The aim was to discuss the memorandum of Slovak-American separatist Gustáv Košík presented to the Department at an earlier date.

²¹ P. Lukáč also suggested that Hodža's visit to the State Department and his memorandum was a reaction to the memorandum of Gustáv Košík (*Memorandum for His Excellency the Honourable Cordell Hull, Secretary of State of the United States of America*). NARA signature 860f.01/429-1/2, Roll 30. Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 612.

future should be decided by democratic majorities of Czechs and Slovaks after the war. Hodža was willing to adhere to this agreement, provided that the exiled Czechoslovak National Council included representatives of Slovak federalists. In the posited post-war settlement, Hodža emphasized the importance of a Czecho-Slovak restoration, but with a provision for Slovak self-government. He argued that Slovakia would not be able to maintain its sovereignty even as a separate member of the Central European federation. In the conclusion to the memorandum, Hodža condemned the Slovak puppet regime and hazarded a guess that its support among Slovaks did not exceed 10%. As for Slovak Americans, he believed that the majority of them had never stopped supporting Czecho-Slovakia. The rest of them, in Hodža's opinion, would soon change their political views.

The official reaction to Hodža's memorandum of December 9, 1941 is not known, but it appears that he made a good impression during his first visit to the State Department. The report written for the Secretary of State Cordell Hull observed that, "Dr. Hodža gave the impression of an able patriot with qualities of sincerity and vision that might be with advantage put to constructive work in the post-war period in Central Europe."²² In his later conversation with Poole, Hodža himself assessed his meeting with Berle in a similar vein.²³ It was intimated to Hodža that, in the future, he might be received by Secretary Hull himself. Moreover, the State Department did not seem to have any objections to Hodža's intention of lecturing at American universities and colleges. It was even suggested that Poole might be able to help by making the necessary arrangements.²⁴ Hodža expected that he would once again be in communication with the Department of State as early as January, 1942. His deteriorating health, however, forced him to stay in American sanatoria for several months, where he recuperated until April of 1942.²⁵

²² NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01/429-3/4, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944. Memorandum of conversation between M. Hodža and A. Berle, H. Hoskins, December 9, 1941, p.

3.

²³ In his report Poole wrote: "He [Hodža] said that he had explained to Mr. Berle his views on the future political organization of Central Europe, and Mr. Berle seemed to be favourably impressed." D. C. Poole later checked Hodža's impressions against those of H. Hoskins: "Following my talk with Dr. Hodža, I spoke on the telephone with Mr. Hoskins, and gathered from him that Dr. Hodža had given a substantially accurate account of his reception at the Department of State and Mr. Berle's attitude." NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-4.

²⁴ During the conversation at the Department of State, C. Cannon suggested that D. C. Poole "might be in the best position to bring this about." NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-4.

²⁵ Lukáč writes that Hodža recuperated from chronic bronchitis in a sanatorium at Lake Placid, New York and Hot Springs, Arkansas. Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 612.

In Hodža's plans, 1942 should have marked a turning-point in his political campaign. After a modest recovery of his health, Hodža launched his lecture tour among Slovak Americans and began publishing in American scholarly journals. On May 16 he outlined his federalization plans to the politically-minded American public in *The Nation*. The reactions of Czech and Slovak Americans to his article, *A Central European Federation*, were collected in two OSS reports from June. Both reports assessed the attitudes of American "Czechoslovaks" towards Hodža as predominantly negative.²⁶ The first one, dated June 1, 1942, pointed out that Czechoslovak Americans had missed the article because they did not regularly read *The Nation*. Still, the OSS observer admitted that Hodža's ideas were, in general, favourably received by many Central Europeans because they were in line with their own post-war plans.²⁷ The other report from June 11 portrays Hodža's arrival in America, his political past and goals in the USA in a very negative light. In the introduction, the author alleged that Czechoslovak Americans received the article with considerable mistrust. Claiming that he had researched the Czechoslovak American press and talked to "a number of leading Czechoslovak Americans as well as Czechoslovak exiles," the OSS observer contended that the article was "not a *bona fide* piece of political thinking, but that it rather serves as a cloak for its author's ambition to become the exclusive or most important spokesman for the Slovaks (American and otherwise), regardless of cost in terms of Czechoslovak unity here and abroad."²⁸ It may be argued that the negative tone of the report was influenced by its author's very selective approach to sources. For example, he claimed that he had read reactions in the "Czechoslovak press," but he did not give any specific titles. The only sources he acknowledged were J. Papánek, professor J. B. Kožák and D. Benau.²⁹ Ján Papánek, head of the Czechoslovak Information Service in the USA and Beneš's right-hand man, referred to Hodža as an "unfortunate incident."³⁰ He maintained that Hod-

²⁶ Neither of the reports makes any distinction between American Slovaks and American Czechs. They refer to both groups collectively as "Czechoslovak Americans."

²⁷ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-47, June 1, 1942, p. 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.* The author of the report signed himself "Ivan Ivanovitch."

²⁹ At the time, Professor Kožák was lecturing at Oberlin College in Ohio. Prior to his arrival in the USA he was a member of the Czechoslovak State Council, a legislative-executive body of Beneš's government-in-exile in London.

³⁰ J. Papánek's negative attitude towards Hodža's political views was widely known. Papánek disagreed with decentralisation to the extent advocated by Hodža. The head of the Czechoslovak Information Service in the USA expressed his attitude towards Hodža in one of his letters to Beneš in January of 1942: "I do not agree with the policy of decentralization or self-government on the scale suggested by Lichner and Hodža. I am convinced that this would lead to a new Žilina [agreement on Slova-

ža's goal was to split the ranks of Slovak Americans, who had been, until his arrival, predominantly in full support of the Czechoslovak government headed by Beneš. Professor Kožák, a former member of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, called Hodža's Central European Agrarian Bloc a reactionary body which collaborated with non-democrats. Benau, editor of the "Czechoslovak" *New Yorksky denník*, added that Hodža had a dubious financial past. Hodža's entrée into Slovak-American politics was facilitated by his long-time friend and associate Michal Múdry Šebík. With his assistance, Hodža first approached the leaders of the Slovak National Alliance. On May 22, 1942, during the meeting of the SNA's Central Committee in Detroit, which discussed Hodža's lecture tour, the majority of the Committee expressed their support for Hodža's political programme.³¹ At that time, Hodža formulated his position on the Slovak question as follows: 1. A Slovak Parliament and Slovak judiciary; 2. Slovak self-government, 3. Slovak as the only official language in Slovakia. With this political aim he launched a series of lectures at local branches of the SNA. However, the decision of the Central Committee was strongly challenged by the conservative wing of the SNA leadership. At the June meeting of the Executive Board, the president, secretary and treasurer of the organization announced their opposition to the decision taken by the Central Committee on May 22. According to these leaders, Hodža's demands were a mere repetition of the Pittsburgh Agreement, which concerned the internal affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic. The leaders proclaimed that, as American citizens, they had no intention of meddling in the internal affairs of the Republic, because that was against the SNA programme as well as American law. In addition to that, the proclamation of the Executive Board pointed out that, it was thanks to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile that Slovaks were not considered enemies of the Allies. Discussions about Slovakia's political future were destroying the unity of the SNA and threatened the future of the Slovak people. In the final part of the proclamation, the three members of the Executive Board issued a warning: "Disputes over things which do not concern us as American citizens – among these disputes is the question of self-government of the Slovak nation – harm our country, harm all of us, and

kia's autonomy, signed Oct. 6, 1938] and all that followed." Slavomír Michálek, *Ján Papánek za vojny Benešovi. Výber z dokumentov 1939 – 1945* (Bratislava: VE-DA, 1997), 97.

³¹ Fifteen members of the Central Committee were in favour of Hodža's lectures, twelve were against. NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-82. Later M. Múdry observed: "The meeting of the SNA's Central Committee in Detroit was especially important in the history of Slovaks. It showed that the great majority of Slovak Americans, in favour of the Czechoslovak Republic, preferred the Czecho-Slovak constitutional arrangement as it was outlined by Dr. M. Hodža." Múdry, *Milan Hodža v Amerike...*, 32.

only help the enemy!"³² The position proclaimed by the Executive Board on June 29 confused other SNA leaders, as well as its rank-and-file. At the same time, it spurred a new wave of discussion about the position of the organization on the Slovak question, which continued throughout 1942.

Several days before his second visit to the Department of State, Hodža had an appointment with Poole and J. C. Wiley of the OSS. After the SNA meeting in Detroit, Hodža expressed his views openly, and his criticism of his opponents was sharper, on occasion turning into personal attacks. He told the OSS officers that his goals were to mobilize Slovak Americans and win their support for a self-governing Slovakia within a restored Czechoslovak Republic. He reiterated that the Czechoslovak constitutional arrangement, agreed upon by the Czechoslovak cabinet in July of 1938, was legally valid and politically binding. During one conversation, the OSS officers noted, Hodža "disclosed a determined opposition to what he called the centralism in the Czechoslovakian constitutional practice of Beneš and his entourage."³³ He criticized Beneš, who, during their London talks in 1939, had been deliberately evasive and noncommittal regarding discussion of Slovakia's constitutional status. In talks with American government officials, Hodža maintained that the campaign against himself in the USA had been masterminded by Papánek. The head of the CIS was not, in Hodža's words, to any degree a political figure, but merely an agent and intriguer for Beneš.³⁴ Apart from the members of the SNA, Hodža was also planning to address the Slovak American Catholics associated within the Slovak League of America. As Hodža put it bluntly in his conversation with Poole, he intended to "destroy this organisation" by winning over its popular support, leaving its leaders without any following, which he believed was very weak.³⁵ Meeting the OSS officers provided Hodža with an opportunity to get some feedback on how his political activities were viewed by the administration. On this, the position of the OSS and the government was clear and unequivocal. American authorities were anxious not to see American

³² The Proclamation of the SNA Executive Board was signed by its President, Jaroslav Pelikán, Secretary Ján W. Gološinec and Treasurer Václav Hovorka. NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-82.

³³ NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01 444-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 1.

³⁴ NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01 444-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 3. On this occasion Hodža also expressed his firm belief in winning the forthcoming trial against the Overseas News Agency. He was convinced that the ONA had obtained its libellous information against him from Papánek, who was to be identified as the true culprit. NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01 444-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 3.

³⁵ Hodža told the OSS that the local branch of the Slovak Catholic Sokol in Passaic, NJ, came out in open support of his programme, as did the First Catholic Slovak Union in Wilkes-Barre, PA. NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01 444-1/2 Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 6.

citizens and alien residents fighting over European political issues on American soil.³⁶

The concerns of the American government about the unity of Slovak Americans were aired once again during Hodža's second visit to the Department of State on June 18, 1942.³⁷ Hodža met H. Hoskins and C. Cannon. On the same day he spoke on the telephone to Assistant Secretary Berle. Hoskins and Cannon were interested in Hodža's ongoing lecture tour among Slovak Americans. The former Czechoslovak premier did not hide his optimism and spoke extremely positively about his campaign.³⁸ He was keen to ascertain how his activities were viewed by the Department of State. In response to his query, Assistant Secretary Berle told Hodža that he thought that his "efforts had been in the right direction."³⁹ He made it clear, though, that the American government did not wish American unity to be disturbed by conflicts among Americans of foreign descent. Apparently, what the Assistant Secretary had in mind under "efforts in the right direction" were activities that would strengthen Czechoslovak unity in the USA. It was obvious that Slovakia's political future *per se* played a secondary role, if any, in the Department of State's post-war strategic planning. We can only wonder whether the Department of State had been informed about the results of the SNA's Detroit meeting at the time of Hodža's telephone conversation with Berle. It can be argued that, if it had been the case, the Assistant Secretary would not have so favorably assessed Hodža's activities. At any rate, Hodža took Berle's statement as an expression of approval of his American campaign. He told this to Poole two days later while travelling with him on the train to New York.⁴⁰ During this conversation, Hodža reiterated that he was determined to get on with his lecture tour among Slovak Americans and to work on the project of the Central European Federa-

³⁶Hodža reacted to this open allusion to his political activities in the USA by assuring the OSS officers that in this respect there could be no objections to his campaign, since his primary aim was to unite, not to divide all Slovak Americans. NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01 444-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 6.

³⁷NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01/446-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944.

³⁸Lukáč quotes from the Memorandum of conversation of June 18: "Since then he has been in touch with various Slovak groups in this country and felt he had made progress in his efforts to convince them that Slovakia *should work out its problem within the framework of the present republic, not as a small independent state*". Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 613.

³⁹Lukáč points out that the original memorandum contains the following handwritten note beside the word "efforts": "This related only to his effort to reduce the controversies between Czechs and Slovaks and similar peacemaking attempts." *Ibid.*, 614.

⁴⁰NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01/446-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944. Author of report D. C. Poole, June 20, 1942. Poole observed Hodža's satisfaction with his visit to the Department of State.

tion.⁴¹ He suggested to Poole that American authorities could get in touch with some of his Hungarian and Yugoslav friends who were in favour of such a federation.⁴² In return, the OSS officer promised to put him in touch with another academic institution, which would enable him to lecture at universities in his capacity as a former history professor.⁴³

While lecturing to Slovak Americans during the summer of 1942, Hodža found himself yet again the target of unwanted publicity. This time, Hodža's political opponents broadcast their views on New York-based radio station WMCA. Though the statements made by the radio commentator are not known, we do know that they drew an indignant response from Hodža. Following the broadcast by WMCA on July 28th, 1942, Hodža contacted Dr. Morris D. Forkosch, his New York-based lawyer, with a view to bringing legal action against the radio commentator. Hodža was adamant that Johannes Steele, the radio presenter in question, as well as his "sponsors," by which Hodža meant the people who supplied him with the slanderous information, should be sued for libel. This, however, was not to be. Four months later, Hodža abruptly asked his lawyer to drop the suit. In one of his telegrams to Forkosch in mid-October, Hodža wrote: "It is imperative that you immediately and explicitly advise the new sponsors of the radio commentator and others you approached that you acted upon mistaken instructions and to withdraw steps [sic]."⁴⁴ From Hodža's correspondence with Forkosch we learn that the defendants (Steele, the WMCA, the Terminal Shops) accepted some sort of "settlement," though it is not at all clear what this arrangement was. What remains baffling is what made Hodža change his mind.

Money may have been part of it. Hodža had been dogged by financial problems since his arrival in the United States. On the other hand, Hodža

⁴¹ NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.01/446-1/2, Roll 30, 1910 – 1944, p. 2.

⁴² Hodža referred specifically to a Hungarian, John Polonyi, and a Yugoslav, Bogolyub Jeftich.

⁴³ During this conversation Hodža expressed his interest in giving informal talks and participating in conferences as a historian of the 19th century. Poole had facilitated academic contacts for Hodža before. In the autumn of 1941 he introduced him to Dr. Duggan, Director of the International Institute of Education and later to Malcolm Davis, who was to assist in Hodža's cooperation with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴⁴ In his letter to Hodža from October 28, 1942, Forkosch recounted all the telegraphic communications between him and Hodža related to the libel suit. He did this, presumably, to clarify all possible misunderstandings as to what Hodža really wanted and what his instructions to Forkosch were. Forkosch, however, did not provide any reasons for his client's decision to drop the case. NARS, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-129. Copy of M. D. Forkosch's letter to Hodža, October 28, 1942, p. 1.

would hardly have initiated a costly new lawsuit if he had not been convinced that he stood a fair chance of having his name cleared and his political detractors exposed.⁴⁵ The FNB files remain silent as to who supplied the WMCA with the information or what motivation drove its commentator to attack Hodža over the airwaves. Michal Múdry Šebík had little doubt that public attacks against Hodža were masterminded by Ján Papánek, and condoned by Beneš's Ambassador in Washington, Vladimír Hurban. This view has not been contested by any Hodža historians. So far, however, there has been no reliable evidence to prove that this was indeed the case. As far as the American government was concerned, it knew all about the perpetrators of the anti-Hodža smear campaign since June of 1943.

The ideological split in the Slovak-American community, partially caused by Hodža's political campaign, was a source of growing concern to the American government. Amidst fears for the unity of Slovak Americans, the Department of State, in co-operation with several other government agencies, decided to take action. On September 14, 1942, the Office of War Information (OWI) organized in Pittsburgh a conference of Slovak newspaper editors and presidents of Slovak organizations.⁴⁶ The intention of the OWI organizers was to unify Slovak-American organizations and persuade their leaders to sign a joint declaration expressing Slovak support for the U.S. government and, at the same time, condemning its enemies, including the Slovak Republic. At the actual conference two resolutions were passed. According to the OSS, on the previous day the members of the Resolution Committee had consulted the wording of both resolutions with Hodža, who had arrived earlier in Pittsburgh.⁴⁷ The first resolution pledged allegiance to the government of the United States and its president. The second one outlined the principles concerning Slovakia's political future, in line with the Atlantic Charter. It stated, among other things, that Czechoslovakia should be "recreated on a basis of equal rights, equal privileges, equal opportunities and equal obligations."⁴⁸ This passage, however, elicited strong objections

⁴⁵ Hodža's libel suit against the Overseas News Agency had been dragging on and off since November of 1941. The case was finally closed in June of 1943.

⁴⁶ The conference was held at the William Penn Hotel. NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-139. OSS, V. P. Backora to Dr. Kelso, September 16, 1942.

⁴⁷ NARS, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-139. In the lead-up to the conference, Hodža met with Vendelín Plátek, president of the National Slovak Society (NSS), Emil Stankovianský, editor of *Slovenský hlásnik* [Slovak Herald], the organ of the Slovak Evangelical Union and J. Willo (NSS), chairman of the Resolution Committee.

⁴⁸ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-143. A photocopy of the September 14 resolution was published in *Slovenský hlásnik* on Octo-

from the "Czechoslovak" hardliners and followers of Beneš under the leadership of Jaroslav Pelikán. The text of the second resolution had to be rephrased, and the controversial part concerning the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks was eventually omitted. In this form, the resolutions did not please any of the participants. The outcome of the conference left both sides unhappy. The OWI had received a token expression of Slovak allegiance, but the disgruntled Slovak leaders, seeking more definite commitments regarding Slovakia's future, remained dissatisfied.⁴⁹

The efforts of the Department of State and the OSS to direct Hodža's activities in favour of Slovak-American unity continued after the unsuccessful conference in Pittsburgh. On September 17, 1942 Assistant Secretary Berle wrote a letter to the OSS in which he asked Poole to settle the ongoing arguments between Papánek and Hodža. In this letter he reiterated the stance of the U.S. government as it was set out in June of 1942. The priorities of the Department did not lie in the various merits and demerits of the argument about the Slovak question, but in the need for unity and peace among Slovak Americans, which would contribute to victory in the war.⁵⁰ The concerns of the U.S. government were further exacerbated about two months later when the leaders of Slovak organizations and Hodža's followers called a new conference with the intention of rallying the Slovak Americans behind Hodža's political programme. A new umbrella organization was established – the Council of Slovak American Organizations and Newspapers (hereafter CASON). This organization later succeeded in encouraging cooperation with some of the Catholic fraternal organizations. Politically, it subscribed to the restoration of Czechoslovakia, but in contrast to Beneš's government-in-exile, it demanded a more definite commitment on Slovakia's status after the war.⁵¹ This development was highly undesirable from the standpoint of the U.S. administration, which had only recently confirmed its definitive recognition of Beneš's government in Lon-

ber 1, 1942. The resolution was signed by twenty-four Slovak leaders and newspaper editors.

⁴⁹ As the OSS observer put it: "The compromise resolution satisfies no one but it is at least a step forward. Hodža is still causing disunity among the American Slovaks." NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-139.

⁵⁰ "The State Department is not at present interested in the merits of the controversy, but it has, of course, a very distinct interest in preserving that harmony and unity which best contributes towards winning the war." Quoted from the letter of A. Berle to D. C. Poole (NARA 860f. 00/993). See Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 617, note 44.

⁵¹ The main figures behind the establishment of CASON were the President of the NSS, V. Plátek, the President of the First Catholic Slovak Union, Michal Vargovich, and Ján Bradáč, at that time the Honorary President of the SNA.

don.⁵² Hodža's campaign among Slovak Americans was becoming an ever more pressing political problem for the U.S. administration. In its March report, the OSS recommended that the State Department step in: "It would be of great value and benefit all around, if our State Department would speak nicely to Mr .Hodja [sic.] and advise him to apply his talents towards unity and not disruption among the Slovak Americans."⁵³

Throughout 1943, apart from campaigning among Slovak Americans, Hodža was occupied with, and increasingly alarmed by, the developments in Czechoslovak foreign policy under Beneš's leadership. In May – June, the president of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile came on an official visit of the United States, where he was met by the highest officials in the country, including the Secretary of State. One of the primary objectives of the president's visit was to gain American approval for his planned journey to Moscow towards the end of the year. There, Beneš was planning to sign a new Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty. This diplomatic initiative was the pinnacle of Beneš's efforts to change the orientation of Czechoslovak foreign policy during WW II. From then on, the international security of the country was no longer to be guaranteed by military alliances with the Western Powers. Instead, it was to be safeguarded through close cooperation and coordination of its foreign policy with that of the Soviet Union. It remains unclear whether, in the summer of 1943, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Roosevelt voiced their approval of the proposed Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty. According to Beneš's personal secretary, Edvard Táborský, Berle said that the United States followed no specific plans in relation to Central Europe, nor did they have any intention of negotiating with Hodža on this issue.⁵⁴ It appears that the ill-defined position of the Roosevelt administration in 1943 confirmed Beneš's conviction that the United States did not hold any objections to Czechoslovakia's new Soviet-oriented foreign policy. Hodža, by contrast, regarded the conclusion of the treaty in December 1943 as a very dangerous step on the road to creating a new Soviet sphere of influence. He also feared that, after the war, the Soviet Union would try to impose on Czechoslovakia a political system similar to its own. Moreover, Hodža was deeply convinced that Slovaks had not a scintilla of sympa-

⁵² The definitive American recognition of the London-based Czechoslovak government-in-exile was granted on October 28, 1942.

⁵³ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, RG 226 E 142, Box 3. Re: Recent Slovak Affairs, Milan Hodža, Jozef Hušek, Fedor Salva, etc., April 3, 1942.

⁵⁴ According to Táborský, Berle felt the need to defend himself against allegations that he sympathized with Hodža. "Hodža was your prime minister and now he is a refugee. We respect him as such, but we will make no political deals with him, I can say this categorically." See Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 620. Document quoted: NARA, 860F. 00/1009.

thy for Russian Bolshevism. He objected vigorously to the treaty, and made his criticism heard.

Beneš's visit to the United States presented the head of the Foreign Nationalities Branch with a perfect opportunity to cut troublesome Hodža down to size. Hodža's long-standing legal feud with the Overseas News Agency (ONA) carried potential risks not only for the news agency itself, but for the whole of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. Back in December of 1941, Hodža had complained to the Office of the Coordination of Information that the ONA had been spreading word that he was a fascist collaborating with Otto von Habsburg and Tibor Eckhardt in a plot hatched by German generals to eliminate Hitler with a view to negotiating a separate peace.⁵⁵ The same source branded the majority of Slovak Americans as isolationist and pro-fascist. Hodža was convinced that if the ONA was made to disclose its source, some of the top Czechoslovak authorities in the USA would be implicated. In June of 1943, the American court which was investigating the libel suit, required the ONA to answer a set of questions contained in a bill of particulars. One of them inquired about the source the ONA drew upon in its news release of November 7, 1941. Shortly before the deadline by which the ONA was to comply, the case took an unexpected turn. On June 1st, Jacob Landau, the agency's managing director, paid a visit to Poole in his Washington office. He briefed the FNB boss about the case and discussed the questions in the bill of particulars. Later on, in his report of the meeting, Poole noted: "If ONA had to answer, Mr. Landau asserted, one of the sources to be named would be the Czechoslovak Ambassador [in the United States]." Such a development was, from the perspective of the U.S. government, highly undesirable. Not only would it expose its wartime ally – the Czechoslovak government-in-exile – as the source of the anti-Hodža smear campaign, it would also fan the flames of the Beneš-Hodža controversy among Slovak Americans. Although the head of the FNB felt he was not in a position to "interfere in an official way," he promised Landau that he would talk to Hodža in order to make him "freely desist" from the libel suit. Three days later in New York, Poole broached the subject of anti-Hodža propaganda in his conversation with Ján Papánek, the head of the Czechoslovak Information Service (hereafter CIS) in the United States. Without telling him what he knew from Landau, Poole received from the CIS head a resolute denial of any involvement on the part of the Czechoslovak government. Nevertheless, Papánek was very pleased with Poole's intention to convince Hodža to desist from the case. On his part, the Czechoslovak propaganda boss promised he would do his utmost

⁵⁵ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-22, p. 1. Memorandum of conversation between John. C. Wiley and Milan Hodža, December 4, 1941.

to prevent further escalation of the Hodža-Beneš controversy. He also mentioned to Poole that during his visit in the States, Beneš held a long private conversation with Ján Pálka, Hodža's son-in-law. This information, whether imparted casually or by design, presented the head of the FNB with the bargaining leverage he so much needed in his dealings with Hodža.

Although Papánek did not tell Poole what Pálka had discussed with Beneš, it was not difficult to surmise. Hodža's dire financial situation was an open secret in Czechoslovak circles, and the OSS knew about it. Until his death in 1944, Hodža struggled to keep his political campaign in America financially afloat. In October of 1942, for example, he asked the Polish government-in-exile for \$650.⁵⁶ In May of the following year, Hodža asked Slovak-American leader Vendelín Plátek to help him out financially. The only regular income Hodža had was a monthly salary of \$250 received from the Czechoslovak government-in-exile for his absentee membership in the London-based State Council. The money was payable to the account of Hodža's wife, who, at that time, resided in Chicago. Being well-informed of Hodža's financial woes, Poole decided to use this information in the name of national interest. On June 5th, he telephoned Hodža, who was convalescing in Clearwater, Florida. The subject of the conversation was the ONA libel suit. According to Poole's account, Hodža was tired of the longstanding legal battle and "had really lost interest in the matter."⁵⁷ This was borne out by David Karr, who had been following the case at the Office of War Information. He informed Poole in November of 1942 that Hodža had indeed tried to drop his lawsuit, but this had not happened because of some misunderstanding between him and his lawyers.⁵⁸ As the secret memorandum of the telephone conversation between the two men suggests, Poole pressured Hodža to discontinue his campaign among Slovak Americans. During the conversation he hinted that both he and President Beneš had been well aware of his financial difficulties. Poole then played his trump

⁵⁶ Dušan Segeš, "Ohlas súdovej krajanskej tlače na politické pôsobenie Milana Hodžu v USA v rokoch 1941 – 1944," in *Milan Hodža politik a žurnalista*, ed. M. Pekník (Bratislava: Veda, 2008), 185. In his article, Segeš writes that Hodža wanted to use the money to gain a dominant influence on the Slovak-American newspaper *Slovenský Hlásnik*. Segeš maintains that in the end Hodža succeeded in getting some of the money.

⁵⁷ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-33CZ-20, p. 4. Memorandum of telephone conversation between D. C. Poole and Milan Hodža, June 10, 1943.

⁵⁸ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-129, November 18, 1942. In his report, D. C. Poole clarified: "He [David Karr] thought that there had been some misunderstanding, in consequence probably of Dr. Hodža's imperfect command of English. Specifically, Mr. Karr gained the impression that Dr. Hodža had instructed his attorneys 'to settle,' meaning come to a final friendly adjustment; but the attorneys interpreted this to refer to obtaining a 'settlement'."

card. He reassured his interlocutor that he had "obtained satisfactory assurances from Dr. Benes that Dr. Hodža's personal situation would not be disturbed."⁵⁹ To make himself absolutely clear, the head of the FNB pointed out to Hodža that "It would seem unfortunate if by pressing the suit against the Overseas News Agency at this time he should bring on a change."⁶⁰ Though elegantly phrased, to Hodža's ears Poole's talk must have sounded like nothing more than political blackmail. There is little doubt that Hodža took his words at face value. In the following days he contacted his lawyer. In order to find out whether he had really done so, Poole telephoned Hodža again on June 10th. Hodža confirmed that he had instructed his lawyer via telegraph to terminate the suit.

Fear for the post-war scenario in Central Europe prompted Hodža to draw up a document – *Europe at the Crossroads* – which he sent to the State Department in March of 1944.⁶¹ This memorandum analyzed the political situation in Central Europe within the context of its states' relations with the Soviet Union. Hodža pointed to the undemocratic character of the Soviet political system, and warned against its application in any form. He challenged Beneš's arguments, according to which the new foreign policy realignment with the Soviet Union was unavoidable. Hodža argued that by signing the treaty, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile willingly entered into the Soviet sphere of influence and thus became an instrument of the Russian *Drang nach dem Westen*. He rejected the policy of creating a "special sphere," the necessity of which Beneš justified by the failure of the Western Powers and the "betrayal of Czechoslovakia" in 1938. He contended that no sphere of influence was able to guarantee the sovereignty of small countries. The only guarantee of security, Hodža maintained, was a system of collective security similar to the one promulgated by the Ameri-

⁵⁹NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-33CZ-20, p. 4. Memorandum of telephone conversation between D. C. Poole and Milan Hodža, June 10, 1943.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹ Some historians doubt whether or not the Department of State actually received the memorandum. Lukáč, who did not have a copy of the document at his disposal, claimed that "Despite the fact that several authors claim the memorandum was sent to the Department, including the author of this article, there is no copy of *Europe at the Crossroads* in the State Department archives. We can only speculate what fate it met, whether it was sent at all or "got lost" in American archives." Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 622. The author of this study (R. Ličko) can confirm that a copy of this 22-page-long memorandum is kept in the National Archives in Washington, in the OSS Foreign Nationalities Branch section with signature INT-32A-75. Moreover, there is also firm evidence that the memorandum was read at the State Department. D. C. Poole, chief of the FNB, summarised its contents in his report of March 8, 1944.

cans and the British in the form of the United Nations. The final victory was achievable only as a "collective victory," with collective war aims. He went on to write, with bitter regret, that the "official Czecho-Slovak policy obviously relinquished this imperative requirement of all alliances."⁶² Hodža expressed his belief that "Czecho-Slovakia surely deserves a better fate than to become the victim of any personal rule or of any kind of soviet system."⁶³ The memorandum also touches upon the position of the U.S. government, which chose not to reject the treaty. Hodža respected this view. However, the American position did not, in his opinion, change the simple fact that the treaty had contributed significantly to the creation of spheres of influence, whose catastrophic consequences would have to be dealt with after the war through a system of collective security.

Part V of the memorandum was devoted to the Slovak question. According to Hodža, the majority of Slovaks, with only a handful of opponents, demanded fair self-government for Slovakia. This demand was in stark contrast to the stubborn centralism of Beneš and his political supporters in exile. Hodža's disapproval of the Soviet Union's influence, in relation to Slovakia's future, was based upon his conviction that the Soviet political system was incompatible with the political and cultural traditions of Slovaks. Hodža vehemently denied that Slovaks had ever sympathized with Communism. He also reminded the State Department that Slovaks had been fighting against Nazism on the Eastern as well as the Western fronts. Moreover, the majority of the Slovak soldiers who had defected from the Slovak army were, in Hodža's opinion, anti-Communists, with whom he had maintained radio contact. They desired, on the whole, a "Slovakia administered by Slovaks." Hodža vigorously denied the allegations, current at the time, that Slovaks had not fought against Fascism. According to his information, as many as 75% of the Czecho-Slovak Army personnel in France between 1939 and 1940 were Slovaks.⁶⁴

Europe at the Crossroads was Hodža's last attempt to influence the U.S. administration. His memorandum was thoroughly analyzed by the OSS. The political analyst who studied it related its content to his superior – DeWitt Poole.⁶⁵ In the introduction of the report, its author noted: "It confirms my impression of him as a man of a high degree of peasant shrewdness." The OSS shared Hodža's concerns about the future of small Central European nations after the war: "The European peoples, more particularly, the East European nationalities, will be potter's clay in the coming interplay of forces." The author fully sanctioned Hodža's proposal to hold plebi-

⁶² NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-32A-75, p. 15.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁴ NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-32A-75.

⁶⁵ Julian Towster to D. C. Poole, March 8, 1944. NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-32A-75.

scites in Central Europe, ideally under the auspices of the United Nations.⁶⁶ Russia's willingness, or lack thereof, to respect the free will of Central Europeans was to be a clear indication of how far this country intended to go in improving its relations with the Western Allies in the post-war period. The OSS report did not pay any particular attention to the issue of Slovakia's future after the war.

At the time when the State Department received the OSS report, Hodža had been undergoing medical treatment in a holiday resort in Florida. Despite several periods of improvement during his stay in the United States, Hodža never recovered from his illness. On June 27, 1944, after an operation in Clearwater, Hodža succumbed to his illness.⁶⁷ His death was an immense loss, primarily to the advocates of Slovak self-government. Moreover, there was a general opinion among Slovak-American leaders that, apart from Štefan Osuský, there was no other political leader at that time who would have been able to unite the politically fragmented Slovak Americans.⁶⁸ Having been a prominent Central European politician and statesman throughout his life, Hodža's death elicited obituaries in a number of leading dailies around the world.⁶⁹ His life-long political contribution to politics was acknowledged by the Czechoslovak government, and even by his political enemies, including Edvard Beneš. Belatedly, the U.S. government paid

⁶⁶ "Hodža is perfectly right in emphasizing the plebiscite angle. Plebiscites may not always have been the best yardstick of true national sentiment, but the principle of unhindered expression of such sentiment and of consultation between the leading United Nations members in regard to securing such expression goes to the heart of the problem."

⁶⁷ Hodža suffered from cancer of the large intestine. According to the autopsy report, the immediate cause of death was a complication – internal obturation during the operation. Hodža never regained consciousness. See Lukáč, "Posledné chvíle Milana Hodžu," in *Občianska spoločnosť*, no. 8 (August, 2000), 10.

⁶⁸ The Slovak leaders, especially those associated in the CASON, suggested Štefan Osuský as Hodža's possible successor, because they did not regard Hodža's aide, Múdry Šebík, as a "strong and effective" leader. FBI, Chicago File No. 100-15744, January 25, 1945. Report: *Slovak National Alliance*, p. 7. Another FBI report written by its director on July 1, 1944, advised the Department of State of Osuský's intention to ask for permission to enter the United States. In addition to giving a brief account of Osuský's political career, the report states that V. Plátek, the leader of the National Slovak Society, wrote a letter to Osuský as early as in June of 1943. In it, Plátek asked Osuský to come to the United States and to assume the leadership of Slovak Americans together with Hodža. NARA, Washington D. C., 860f.20211/7-1844 PS/VL, Roll 31, 1940 – 1944. Memorandum of J. E. Hoover to A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State. Subject: Milan Hodža and Stefan (Stephen) Osuský, July 1, 1944.

⁶⁹ *The New York Times* published Hodža's obituary on June 29, 1944. On July 4, 1944 the newspaper reported on Hodža's funeral in Chicago.

tribute to this outstanding Czechoslovak statesman. In 1951, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles praised Hodža's understanding of the mutual interdependence of sovereign and equal peoples, and acknowledged Hodža's contribution to the cause of European unity.⁷⁰ Given the scope of Hodža's plans and activities in the United States during WW II, one has to ask oneself: what did the Roosevelt administration's foreign policymakers make of Hodža's federalization plans, and what solution, if any, did they think desirable in the dispute about Slovakia's post-war future? What significance did Hodža's plans play in American strategic planning in Central Europe? Were these in line with the existing American blueprint for the overall European peace settlement, or did they contradict it? To what extent were Hodža's plans for a Central European federation examined, and what political will was there to intervene in the debate on the post-war status of Slovakia?

American and European historians more or less share the same view that Central Europe, throughout WW II, was not an area of priority in the United States' strategic planning. United States foreign policy in Central Europe was the outcome of a variety of factors, domestic and international, and on the whole it could be characterized as unsystematic.⁷¹ Another characteristic of this policy was the fact that the United States' attitudes towards Eastern Europe went through several changes during WW II. To a large extent, these changes were the result of the personal influence of key political figures in the White House, as well as in the Department of State. It is commonly known that, at the beginning of the war, President Roosevelt was an advocate of the doctrine of the *Four Policemen*, according to which the four greatest powers – the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China – were expected to take over the responsibility for the post-war political organization of the territories subjected to their influence. In Central Europe, this would mean an unprecedented increase in Soviet influence, given that Germany was to be disarmed after the war and its influence eliminated for good. From the standpoint of Hodža's political plans, this represented an undesirable return to spheres of influence against which he so persistently warned.

⁷⁰ Lukáč, *Politická činnosť Milana Hodžu...*, 625.

⁷¹ The Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad summarizes the non-systematic nature of this policy as follows: "So tenuous was the coherence of the many diverse elements in these policies, fluctuating in response to political and economic forces within the US itself, to local events in Eastern Europe, and to the challenges inherent in Great Power rivalry, that I have chosen the term the American non-policy to describe the end result of the various influencing factors. American policy-makers were never quite able to make up their minds about the importance of Eastern Europe to the United States." Lundestad, *American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe* (Oslo: Universitets forlaget, 1978), 34.

Quite a different view of the post-war world order was held by Secretary of State Cordell Hull. He advocated a vision of a globalized world, in which economic and political conflicts among sovereign countries were to be solved through a world organization.⁷² However, the idea of resurrecting a world organization on the principle of the interwar League of Nations was extremely unpopular in the United States. Warming up to such an idea took some time and was a gradual process.⁷³ After the resignation of Sumner Welles from the position of Under Secretary of State in 1943, Cordell Hull finally succeeded in convincing the conservative-minded Department of State to accept the idea of a new United Nations. In relation to Central Europe, the new line in foreign policy resulted in the conviction that the reformed system of collective security would prevent the recreation of old spheres of influence. This was also the reason why the State Department was very reluctant to give its views on the various integration schemes of the Central European governments in exile. The growing influence of the Soviet Union in this area was a worrying development for the Roosevelt administration, but did not lead to a significant shift in the established policy of non-intervention.⁷⁴ Surprisingly enough, despite the negative attitude towards European integration in general, the archival documents of the Department of State suggest that the U.S. foreign policy makers devoted con-

⁷² This track of American foreign policy in the 20th century is frequently referred to as "globalism," or, "universalism." See Michael Lind, "The Twilight of the U.N.," *The New Republic*, October 30, 1995, p. 28.

⁷³ The League of Nations, created in 1920, was part of the peace initiative of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, generally known as the "Fourteen Points." In terms of conflict resolution and international security, the organization's philosophy was based upon the principle of collective security, which stood in opposition to the notion of the balance of power and advancement of national interests. The U.S. Congress, however, refused to ratify the League's Covenant. Wilson's peace initiative is often criticized and branded as an example of American political idealism. From the point of view of international relations, Wilson's plan stemmed from "*idealistic and liberal dissatisfaction with the international anarchy, balance of power and the concept of self-help which had hitherto characterized the state-system.*" Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newham, *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin books, 1998), p. 300.

⁷⁴ In the introduction to his book *The Myth of Liberation; East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics Since 1941*, Bennett Kovrig described American idealism in relation to Central Europe in the words of A. J. P. Taylor: "democratic foreign policy must be idealistic, or at the very least it has to be justified in terms of great general principles". Kovrig added, "Yet the reader will find few villains and even fewer heroes, for seldom in the history of America's foreign relations have good intentions reaped such a bitter harvest". Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation; East-Central Europe in U.S. Diplomacy and Politics since 1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), x.

siderable time to various integration schemes such as those proposed by Hodža.⁷⁵ The duties of investigating and assessing these plans, as well as drawing up recommendations which were to serve as guidelines in American post-war foreign policy, were entrusted to the Department of State Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy.⁷⁶

Browsing through the minutes of the Advisory Committee between May 1942 and March 1944 gives one some idea of how much time and space the Department of State devoted to federalization plans for Central Europe and what attitudes towards them various committee members maintained. On May 9, the Committee's agenda included the so-called Danubian Federation.⁷⁷ The discussions focused on two plans drawn up by politicians in exile. One of these plans was the proposal for a Czechoslovak-Polish union, put forward in the United States by the exiled Polish Prime Minister

⁷⁵ Documentary sources from the American archives relating to the U.S. attitudes towards Central European integration were collected and annotated by the Polish authors J. Łaptos and M. Misztal Marius, *American Debates on Central European Union, 1942 – 1944. Documents of the American State Department* (Brussels & New York: P.I.E.-P. Lang, 2002).

⁷⁶ F. D. Roosevelt approved of the establishment of the Advisory Committee three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 28, 1941. It included academics as well as leading officers of the Department of State. The Committee reported directly to the State Secretary. At that time, the position of vice-chairman was held by Under Secretary Sumner Welles. Everyday activities were overseen by Leo Pasvolksy. The Advisory Committee had six subcommittees, the most important of which were those dedicated to political, economic and territorial issues. Other key figures on the Committee who specialised in Central Europe were Hamilton Fish Armstrong (1893 – 1973) and Adolf A. Berle. It was the latter who was often believed by Czech and Slovak émigrés to have harboured sympathies for Hodža's plans. The Committee's job was to draw up general guidelines for the United States in peace negotiations. The official activity of this Committee was ended in the summer of 1943, but many of its members continued their work on other committees until the end of the war. The Committee's research team drew up hundreds of reports, situational analyses and recommendations, which became a blueprint for the discussions and proceedings of the Committee and its subcommittees. Regular minutes of the subcommittees' discussions were kept. The documentation produced by the Advisory Committee is deposited in the National Archives in the Notter File. See Ignac Romcis, "Wartime American Plans for a New Hungary. Documents from the U.S. Department of State, 1942 – 1944" *Atlantic Studies on Society in Change*, [online], 1992, 30, no. 77. [Quoted: 2008-06-05]. Available at: <<http://www.hungarian-history.hu>>

⁷⁷ The term "Danubian Federation" was chosen by the Advisory Committee to refer to the integration efforts of the Central European countries in the Danubian region. The discussions of the Advisory Committee on the "Danubian Federation" included possible membership for Poland and Austria.

Władysław Sikorski.⁷⁸ The other was the Danubian Federation, championed by exiled Hungarian politicians Tibor Eckhardt and János Pelényi.⁷⁹ Hodža's federation plan was not included. It was referred to only marginally by a member of the Committee, Anne McCormick.⁸⁰ She mentioned Hodža as an agrarian politician who had been involved in solving agrarian problems.⁸¹ The foreign policy analyst went on to inform the Committee, quite misleadingly, that Hodža's plan limited itself to the Danubian region.⁸² This ignorance of the details of Hodža's plan is interesting, because by that time Hodža had already spoken about his plans to *The New York Times* and, more importantly, must have made his views known at the State Department during his first visit.⁸³ Hodža's plan was almost completely

⁷⁸ Łaptos and Mizstal pointed out that Sikorski's plan for federation was dealt with only briefly. According to the information available to the Committee, Sikorski's federation was to comprise Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. The plan envisaged the complete economic federation and eventual political federation of its constituent countries. According to the Advisory Committee, Polish influence in the thus-constituted federation was obvious, though the sheer scale of the supranational state ruled out complete Polish domination. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 74.

⁷⁹ Tibor Eckhardt was a Hungarian politician of the interwar period. In 1938 he represented Hungary at the League of Nations Assembly. In 1941 he was sent on a mission to the USA by Miklós Horthy in order to approach the Allies and the Hungarian democratic opposition. Eckhardt's federation was brought to the attention of the Committee by Under Secretary of State Welles. According to this plan, Central Europe was to be divided into three parts: a Polish-Baltic bloc, a Balkan bloc and a "Danubian" union, comprising Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Slovakia and Transylvania, with the possibility of the later admission of Croatia. The unifying element of the federation was to be their common history as part of the Habsburg monarchy. NARCS Notter File, Department of State. Minutes P – 10, Danubian Federation, May 9, 1942. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 74.

⁸⁰ Anne O'Hare McCormick (1882 – 1954), a member of the Advisory Committee, was a foreign policy analyst for *The New York Times*.

⁸¹ The minutes of the meeting captured McCormick's information on Hodža and his plan as follows: "Mrs. McCormick said that mention might also be made of the Hodža plan, which confines itself to the Danubian area. Mr. Hodža, she pointed out, being a peasant, is chiefly concerned with the agricultural problem. His plan expresses the aspirations of the Green International." Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 75.

⁸² In Hodža's plan the core of the proposed federation was to be formed by Czechoslovakia and Poland, who were to be joined by other countries in the south of Central Europe.

⁸³ See *Hope Put in Union of Central Europe*, the OSS report on the interview with M. Hodža. NARA, Washington D. C., OSS, FNB Files, 1942 – 1945, INT-9CZ-1, December 7, 1941.

ignored. It was mentioned in passing in connection with the association of agrarian parties known as the Green International.

American foreign policy advisors again failed to include Hodža's plan when they discussed the so-called East European Union as one of the issues related to the Department of State's plans to create a world organization.⁸⁴ The members of the Division of Special Research discussed, among other things, the results of the negotiations between the exiled governments of Czechoslovakia and Poland on the creation of a joint union.⁸⁵ In mid-June of 1942, the Department of State presented to the Advisory Committee the first draft of American recommendations which any supranational organization in Central Europe should comply with. One of the main differences, in comparison with Hodža's plan, was that the United States preferred a union to a federation. This preference reflected the Roosevelt administration's unwillingness to sanction political integration. What the Department of State recommended was a loose organization of free sovereign states, which would be able to advance their interests through joint, non-legislative institutions. Such an economic union was to comprise all states of Central and Eastern Europe, including countries as far apart as Estonia, Austria and Greece.⁸⁶

The establishment of this union would have to take place under the auspices of the United Nations. The main rationale was that the establishment of such a union would solve the existing security problems and bring with it economic advantages as a result of regional cooperation. The territorial integrity of the union was to be safeguarded by the United Nations, and the security forces of the union were to act in concordance with the security system of the United Nations. After the war, the world organization was to facilitate the creation of the union by adjusting all outstanding border claims. What is most striking to the European reader about the attitudes of the American government are its views on the armed forces of member

⁸⁴ The meeting of the Division of Special Research, which prepared reports for the Advisory Committee, took place on June 6, 1942. Department of State, Division of Special Research, Minutes P 14, June 6, 1942. NARA, Notter File, Box 65., Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 96 – 103.

⁸⁵ For the history of the Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations on uniting, including the attitudes of the United States and the other great powers, see Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940 – 1943*.

⁸⁶ "The regional organization should have the form not of a federation but of a union of independent and sovereign states, cooperating for limited objectives through common non-legislative institutions, loosely rather than tightly organized. Provisionally the union is considered as including all states of Central and Eastern Europe between Russia and Germany from and including Estonia in the North to Austria in the West and Greece in the South." Department of State, Division of Special Research, Minutes P Document 24, June 19, 1942. NARA, Notter File, box 55. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 110.

countries, as well as on the military of the union as a whole. Every constituent country would have to contribute a designated contingent of troops for the international armed forces (under the command of the UN), but no member state was to have its own armed forces. This recommendation testified to the distrust with which the American foreign policymakers looked upon the nations of Central Europe.

The Advisory Committee's analysis of the factors which were thought to be conducive to, or had disintegrating effects upon, the creation of a Central European Union offers an interesting insight into the mindset of the American foreign policy advisors of that time. In the beginning the majority of the Committee members seemed to be in favour of one large Central European union from the Baltic to the Balkans.⁸⁷ It was argued that a larger union was more advantageous to the United States, because it would be better able to eliminate the destructive forces of nationalism, mutual antagonisms and the land disputes of the Central European nations.⁸⁸ An analysis of the economic benefits failed to persuade American foreign policy advisors that economic prosperity was in itself motivationally adequate for unification. In the American view, the history of integration efforts in the inter-war period showed that political interests in the area had often been given priority over economic ones. The unification of Czechs and Slovaks was pointed out as an example. According to L. Pasvolsky, Masaryk and Beneš were willing to accept any economic disadvantages in order to achieve political and cultural unity after WW I.⁸⁹ It was nationalism, however, that elicited the greatest fears in the members of the Committee. The issue was frequently raised during the discussions, and the Department of State believed that nationalism was one of the five main obstacles to Central European integration.⁹⁰ As the feasibility study for the Department of State from

⁸⁷ This notion was supported most enthusiastically by S. Welles and H. F. Armstrong.

⁸⁸ From the economic point of view, a larger union appeared to offer better prospects of strengthening the commercial position of member states in trade with the rest of Europe. As for the centrifugal forces of nationalism, the gravest concerns at the Department of State were aroused by Hungarian nationalism, with some criticism also levelled at the former Czechoslovakia.

⁸⁹ "Mr. Bowman observed that in the case of the unification of the Czechs and the Slovaks the main emphasis had been on the achievement of political and cultural unity from the beginning. Economic considerations had played a decidedly minor part." Department of State, Advisory Committee, R Minutes 7, November 12, 1943.

⁹⁰ Apart from nationalism, the list of five disintegrative forces comprised the absence of common roots, cultural diversity, external political influences and diversity in regional economic development. Department of State, P Document 204, The Feasibility of an East European Union, February 19, 1943. NARA, NARA, Notter File,

February, 1943 observed, "Since the present war began, the animosity between several of the states, e.g., between Bulgaria and Greece, and between Hungary and Romania, has been greatly increased and the conflicts between ethnic groups within one state e.g., between Czechs and Slovaks, between Serbs and Croats, have become bitter."⁹¹

Where the State Department seemed to be in agreement with Hodža was the belief that the peasantry could play a positive role in the process of Central European integration. In the inter-war period, peasant parties in Central Europe had engaged in mutual cooperation and shared a similar political agenda.⁹² A member of the Committee, J. T. Shotwell, also sympathised with this opinion, but expressed reservations about the role of agrarian leaders, who, in his view, had nationalistic tendencies which might prove distracting.⁹³ The discussion about the cohesive and destructive forces of unification eventually prompted the members of the Committee to break the proposed union into two parts. With regard to the attitudes of the exiled governments, Berle pointed out that, surprisingly, none of these supported a large union, with the exception of the Czechoslovak government.⁹⁴ Strictly speaking, however, this was no longer the case. By that time, the Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations had reached a stalemate and the Czechoslovak

Box 57. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 187 – 88.

⁹¹ Department of State, P Document 204, The Feasibility of an East European Union, February 19, 1943. NARA, Notter File, Box 57. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 188.

⁹² State Department, P Document 204, The Feasibility of an East European Union, Part III: Movements Tending Toward Unity, February 19, 1943. NARA, Notter File, Box 57. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 188.

⁹³ According to Shotwell, the majority of Central European leaders were nationalists of the 19th century type. As an example he pointed to Count Apponyi, who owned land in Slovakia, a fact which had a great deal of influence on his political outlook. Department of State, Division of Special Research, Political Subcommittee, Minutes P 17, June 27, 1942. Milan Hodža himself often mentioned the agrarian problems in Hungary. That was also why he laid down conditions on the membership of Hungary in a Central European Federation, stressing first the necessity of agrarian reform in that country.

⁹⁴ Łaptos and Mizstal put Berle's incorrect information down to the skilfulness of the Czechoslovak propaganda. "The question was asked whether Mr. Welles and Mr. Berle had talked with representatives of these countries on this matter. Mr. Berle said that no one of that group had the concept of a single union. Mr. Welles said he had never found one who had the conception of one union, most favoring three unions; some, two. Mr. Berle said that the Czechs were the only ones who had offered any support for a single union." Department of State, Division of Special Research, Political Subcommittee, Minutes P 17, June 27, 1942. NARA, Notter File, Box 55. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 129 – 30.

government was getting increasingly cold feet about any union with its northern neighbour. At the end of June, the members of the Committee agreed that for the sake of further discussions about Central European integration they would consider two options— the so-called Northern East European Group and a Balkan Group.⁹⁵

Another key issue to which the Advisory Committee devoted its attention was the problem of how viable the proposed union would be and what attitudes the great powers would adopt in dealing with this supranational state. According to the above-mentioned feasibility study, the political will of the member states alone was insufficient for the union's long-term survival. American foreign policymakers understood perfectly well that in order for the union to survive, it had to secure the support of the victorious powers, including that of the United States.⁹⁶ The advantages from the American point of view seemed palpable enough: a solution to questions of security in relation to Germany and Russia, pacification of the space between the Baltic and the Aegean seas in an area inaccessible to the naval powers, and the protection of Eastern European countries against possible German expansion. The most important question, of course, was how such a union would be viewed by the geographically closest of the powers – the Soviet Union. In the October Memorandum on Russia and the East European Federation, drawn up by the Council on Foreign Relations, an expert on Soviet affairs informed the Committee that the reasons for Soviet opposition were far stronger than those which might induce the Soviet Union to support such a scheme.⁹⁷ The first and the most decisive reason for Soviet

⁹⁵ The proposal to break up the union was put forward by Under Secretary of State Welles at the meeting of the Division of Special Research on June 27, 1942. The main reason was the diverse character of the member states of the union, which might lead to its disintegration. On the issue of breaking up the union, the members of the Committee were by no means united. Welles was in principle in favour of a single union, but practical considerations compelled him to opt for two smaller ones. The key problem of the two-union solution was Austria and Hungary. Department of State, Division of Special Research, Political Subcommittee, Minutes P 17, June 27, 1942. NARA, Notter File, Box 55. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 119–20.

⁹⁶ See Part IV: Steps Necessary to make Union Effective: "In view of the fact that Eastern Europe has felt the impact of virtually none of those dynamic forces that would aid in creating a unity out of this diversity of peoples, the creation of a union and its maintenance for an indefinite period would have to be in large measure the work of the great victorious powers or of the international organization." State Department, P Document 204, The Feasibility of an East European Union, Part IV: NARA, Notter File, Box 57. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 191.

⁹⁷ The author of the memorandum was Isaiah Bowman. The Council on Foreign Relations, Studies of American Interests in the War and the Peace, Territorial series,

opposition was the assumption that the establishment of a union would prevent the Soviet Union from exercising its policy of *divide et impera*. Moscow was also worried that the political orientation of the Central European countries within the proposed union would lead to the weakening of the existing pro-Russian orientation in some of them.⁹⁸ There is little doubt that Czechoslovakia was one of those countries. Its president-in-exile Edward Beneš had indicated that Czechoslovak foreign policy after the war would be oriented towards the east. The Soviet attitude towards integration in Central Europe was yet again referred to by American foreign policy advisors as “apparently hostile” in February of 1943.⁹⁹ The report made it clear that Moscow was in no mood to support federalization plans of a lesser scope, such as the proposed Czechoslovak-Polish or Greek-Yugoslav unions. The Department of State reached this conclusion on the basis of the information obtained directly from representatives of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. The negative attitude of Moscow was also identified as the main rea-

October 26, 1942. NARA, Notter File, Box 61. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 176.

⁹⁸ The author continues: “The possibilities of supporting Czechoslovakia against Poland, Hungary against Rumania, Yugoslavia against Hungary and so forth, present an almost limitless field for maneuver by Russia to make its influence strong and even preponderant among the disunited states of East Central Europe.” Other Soviet objections could be summarized as follows: 2. the united states of Central Europe would find it easier to advance their territorial claims against Russia, 3. the political system of the member countries would unify, but become very likely hostile to that of the Soviet Union, 4. the union’s armed forces would be stronger in defence, which would weaken Soviet military position, 5. the exports of such a federation would compete in world markets with Soviet exports; Soviet exports into the union would be disadvantaged, since Russia would have to deal with the union as a whole rather than trading with countries separately, 6. the union would curb the revived pan-Slav sentiment, because it would include non-Slav countries and the pro-Russian orientation of the Slav countries would thus be weakened. The Council on Foreign Relations, *Studies of American Interests in the War and the Peace*, Territorial series, October 26, 1942. NARA, Notter File, Box 61. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 177.

⁹⁹ “On the basis of information at present available in the Political Section, the Soviet Government is apparently hostile to the idea of the creation of an all-embracing East European Union, unless, perhaps, such a Union were established under the preponderant influence of the Soviet Union. An examination of the Soviet press and periodicals has disclosed no discussions of such projects for an Eastern European Union as have been put forward from time to time in Britain and the United States.” Department of State, Division of Special Research, Document P 206, February 18, 1943. NARA, Notter File, Box 57. ŁAPTOS, Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 196.

son why the Czechoslovak government broke off its negotiations with the Polish government-in-exile.¹⁰⁰

The work of the Advisory Committee for Postwar Foreign Policy officially ended in July of 1943, though some of its subcommittees continued their work on Central European integration plans until the spring of 1944.¹⁰¹ The issue of Slovakia's post-war political status never came up. Neither was it discussed by any of the Committee's numerous subcommittees.

The abandonment of American discussions of the Central European integration plans raises two questions: what were the reasons for this decision and what political future did the Roosevelt administration envisage for the Central European nations? The answer to the first question should be looked for in the analyses of U.S. foreign policy for this period. Drawing on the latest historical research, one finds, more or less, consensus on this issue. The dominant factor in American strategic planning was the growing military presence of the Soviet Union in Central Europe, which went hand in hand with its increasing political influence. It became clear, towards the end of 1943, that the Red Army would liberate a substantial part of Central Europe, a fact which would inevitably increase the role of the Soviet Union in the post-war political organization of the area.

Regardless of their original plans, President Roosevelt and the Department of State had to constantly adjust to these developments. In 1943, under pressure of the events on the Eastern Front, Roosevelt was forced to review his erstwhile concept of an "Anglo-American world police force" and extend it into the well-known "Four Policemen" theory. This had to take the Soviet Union into account as an equal partner in the political organization of territories within its own sphere of influence. From this point of view it

¹⁰⁰ "Mr. Berle remarked that when the Polish-Czech confederation was agreed upon, both parties had believed that the Russians were not opposed to the idea. The worsening of relations between Russia and the Polish government-in-exile, however, has since resulted in a change in the Russian position. The Czechs have withdrawn from their discussions with the Poles, ostensibly because the Poles were unwilling to abandon their claim to the Teschen area, but in reality because of Russian opposition to the combination." Department of State, Advisory Committee, R Minutes 7, November 12, 1943. NARA, Notter File, Box 84. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union*..., 217.

¹⁰¹ Secretary of State Cordell Hull ended the work of the Committee in a letter of July 12, 1943. Mary E. Bradshaw, "Congress and Foreign Policy Since 1900," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 289 (September, 1953), 45. The last minutes of the Political Subcommittee dealing with the Central European union were those of March 15- 17, 1944, NARA, Notter File, Box 84. The last meeting of the Economic Subcommittee took place on March 31, 1944. Advisory Committee, Economic Subcommittee, R Minutes 16, March 31, 1944. NARA, Notter File, Box 84. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union*..., 243.

can be understood why any American position on a Central European federation or union had to be approved by Moscow. The absence of a Soviet stance on the issue throughout 1942 kept the idea of integration alive among the exiled politicians of Central Europe, and occupied the minds of American foreign policy advisors on the Advisory Committee. Doubts about Moscow's priorities were finally ended in October of 1943, when the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Viacheslav Molotov, officially confirmed the negative position of the USSR.¹⁰²

The answer to the second question, namely what the Americans desired as the political future for Central Europe, is more complicated. First of all, it needs to be emphasized that the views of the Roosevelt administration on this issue were not unanimous. Significant differences of opinion existed in Washington, which divided even the chief foreign policy makers, President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull. American historians' interpretation of the U.S. foreign policy objectives in Central Europe during this period have gone through several developments since WW II.¹⁰³ The more recent research emphasizes the importance of Roosevelt's role in the process of foreign policymaking, and interprets his apparent lack of determination and unsystematic approach as misleading. According to this interpretation, Roosevelt, from the beginning of the war, pursued a clear goal in relation to Continental Europe: to reduce its international standing and marginalize it as the most effective way of preventing future conflicts in the area. Roosevelt intended to achieve this marginalization through fragmentation of the continent into small, relatively powerless, and wherever possible, ethnically homogenous states. These states should in no case possess any armed forces, and after disarmament they should be placed within the sphere of influ-

¹⁰² This information was imparted to the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who asked V. Molotov about the Soviet view on Central European integration efforts at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, October 19 – 29, 1943. Łaptos and Mizstal, *American Debates on Central European Union...*, 63.

¹⁰³ The oldest interpretation of U.S. foreign policy towards Europe maintains that the Roosevelt administration favoured active involvement in the rebuilding of European democracies and in strengthening the position of European states. Roosevelt is criticised, however, because he was unable to see through Stalin's empty promises at Yalta. The second, "revisionist" theory contends that the post-war division of Europe was a *fait accompli* long before Yalta, because the Red Army would occupy the whole of Eastern Europe and the United States had to respect this fact. "Elena Aga-Rossi, "Roosevelt's European Policy and the Origins of the Cold War: A Reevaluation," *Telos. A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought* 26 (no. 2, 1996), 73. Lundestad, who reviewed both of the above theories, characterized U.S. foreign policy towards Central Europe as a policy of "modified universalism in the area of non-essential interest for the USA." For the lack of internal coherence in this policy he chose to refer to it as a "non-policy." G. Lundestad, *American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe...*, 34.

ence of either Britain or the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ Such a vision of the future of Central European nations was incompatible with Hodža's federalization. He feared the political influence of the Soviet Union and, therefore, called for concerted efforts to strengthen the position of Central Europe. As far as Slovakia's future was concerned, Roosevelt's policy of non-intervention, whether intentional or inadvertent, played more into the hands of Slovak separatists than those of the proponents of federative integration.¹⁰⁵ Roosevelt's concept of new spheres of influence, however, stood in contrast to the universalistic vision of Secretary of State Hull, who was advocating global cooperation among nations on the basis of a renewed world organization. The key moment, which resulted in the adoption of the universalistic approach as the main guideline in U.S. foreign policy, is usually thought to be the resignation of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles.¹⁰⁶ After Welles's resignation, Secretary of State Hull and his department advanced the concept of collective security within the framework of a restored world organization under a new name.¹⁰⁷ The new line in American foreign policy, however, did not make the Roosevelt administration take a more active role in suppressing the emerging Soviet sphere of influence. On the contrary, Roosevelt continued to count on Soviet assistance as a decisive political force in the post-war reorganization of Central Europe. What he and his foreign policy advisors got wrong was the belief that Stalin's Russia would sooner or later discard its system of central planning, return to the market economy and join the rest of the democratic world.

¹⁰⁴ "As he [Roosevelt] told the British Foreign Minister in March 1943, 'armaments after the war in Europe should be concentrated in the hands of the policing powers – Britain, the United States and Russia. The smaller powers might have rifles but nothing more dangerous than this'... These two great powers had to maintain order over other disarmed European countries, if necessary by force." Aga-Rossi, "Roosevelt's European Policy and the Origins of the Cold War", 72.

¹⁰⁵ "He [Roosevelt] also envisioned splitting up multiethnic countries such as Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia." Aga-Rossi, "Roosevelt's European Policy and the Origins of the Cold War," 70. On another occasion, when meeting representatives of the Slovak League in 1940, Roosevelt remarked: "I believe that every nationality, no matter how small, has the inherent right to its nationhood." Ever since then, the Slovak League interpreted the president's statement as approval of the establishment of an independent Slovak state. NARA, Washington D. C., 860F-01/446. Reverend C. Mlynarovich to C. Manion of the Office for Government Report, Indiana, May 11, 1942.

¹⁰⁶ Sumner Welles, Roosevelt's closest ally in the Department of State, was a strong supporter of the president's concept of the "Four Policemen." Roosevelt did not trust Hull. In 1943 the president accepted Welles's resignation in connection with his alleged homosexual activities.

¹⁰⁷ In the field of international relations, Hull's approach to foreign affairs is often associated with the principles of universalism, globalism and political idealism.

Thus we have seen that, between 1941 and 1944, the American authorities closely followed the political activities of exiled Slovak politician Milan Hodža. His political goal in the United States was twofold. First, he intended to influence Roosevelt's foreign policy makers in favour of the creation of a supranational federation of Central European states, which he saw as a political panacea for the area's many unresolved problems. According to this plan, a restored Czechoslovakia was to be one of the founding members of such a federation. Slovakia was to be part of Czechoslovakia again, but with a new constitutional arrangement stipulating its equal political status with the Czech lands. Secondly, Hodža planned to lead a political campaign among Slovak Americans. In particular, he hoped to win the endorsement of the leaders of their organizations for his programme of a self-governing Slovakia.

Various federal agencies' keen interest in Hodža, however, was not motivated by the desire of the U.S. government to support the creation of a central European federation. It rather stemmed from the fact that U.S. governmental agencies had deep misgivings about the effects of Hodža's campaign among Slovak Americans. Thus, for the American government, Hodža soon emerged as an unwelcome guest as the OSS began in mid-1942 supplying various U.S. departments with reports about the ideological split within the Slovak-American community. The fears frequently expressed in the OSS reports were motivated by the perceived possible consequences of Hodža's campaign on the home front as well as the on the American war effort in general. Foremost among these fears was that the Hodža-inspired opposition to the Beneš-led government-in-exile would not only undermine the standing of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile – one of the war-time allies of the United States – but would also have a deleterious effect on the morale of the hundreds of thousands of Slovak Americans employed in key American heavy industries.

Hodža's political campaign among Slovak Americans targeted two deeply antagonistic camps. He attempted to win the support of the leaders of the Slovak National Alliance, who had originally supported Beneš's government-in-exile. At the same time, he tried to negotiate with the leaders of the Slovak League of America, several of whom offered their organizations' support for his programme. However, Hodža failed to eliminate the powerful influence of the hard-liners in these umbrella organizations. The Czechoslovak Information Service in the United States, a propaganda tool of the London-based Czechoslovak government-in-exile, severely criticized Hodža's campaign among Slovak Americans, constantly challenging his right to discuss Slovakia's future on American soil and running a smear campaign against him. The U.S. administration viewed Hodža's activities with growing alarm. The most worrying development from the American point of view was the ideological split in the Slovak National Alliance which devel-

oped as a result of Hodža's lecture tour. The OSS repeatedly called on the Department of State to intervene in order to mend the rift among the pro-Czechoslovak fraternal leaders.

Hodža's attempts to influence the attitudes of the Roosevelt administration towards the future organization of Central Europe had little impact on American foreign policy. Indeed, his plan for a Central European federation was never discussed by the American foreign policy advisors. Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of State and its agencies devoted considerable time to weighing the pros and cons of Central European integration from the point of view of American interests. The Department of State tended to favour an economic union rather than a political federation. Moreover, it feared the destructive forces of Central European nationalisms, not excluding the Slovak and Czech ones. However, the major American objection to any form of Central European integration stemmed from the strong opposition to it from the United States' chief war ally in Eastern Europe – the Soviet Union. Stalin had no intention of supporting any integration plans in the area. He preferred a fragmented Central Europe made up of weak states, which would strengthen the negotiating position of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis these countries. Roosevelt's policy of deliberate non-intervention in Central Europe, coupled with the American belief in a new world organization, resulted after the war in a gradual Sovietization of Central Europe and the creation of a new sphere of influence. Given the pro-Soviet foreign policy orientation of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile from December of 1943 onwards, the Roosevelt administration refrained from publicly expressing any of its views on Slovakia's post-war future.

SEEMING AND BEING: CONTEXTUALIZING THE HISTORY OF POST - COMMUNIST SLOVAKIA

Juraj Hocman

The year 1989 marked the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia and the beginning of Slovakia's road to independence. For the Slovaks this year also revealed the gap between their perception of national history and how it was viewed from the outside. In the 1990s, a new generation of western scholars contrasted the post-communist change of Czechoslovakia's two nations. In their studies of modern Slovak society they rarely went beyond 1918. They relied very much on general accounts and traditional dichotomies between the Czechs and Slovaks, such as 'industrial' versus 'rural,' 'secular' versus 'religious,' 'progressive' versus 'backward.'¹ This was why in the 1990s the Slovaks continued to be seen as a "non-historic" nation hastily modernized during the communist era. Since it was mostly invisible in Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Slovak history automatically appeared as ruptured and fragmented. Following the downfall of the communist regime and the creation of the independent Slovak Republic in January of 1993, the country's image was primarily associated with radical nationalism, intolerance towards its minorities and an unstable domestic political scene. All of these seemed to have been sufficient to explain Slovakia's failure to achieve a functioning democracy in the mid-1990s. In the early 2000s, a second-wave of scholarly interest in Slovakia began. Attracted by the country's economic progress and an overall social and political stability, western scholars turned their attention to what had seemed in the 1990s as a satisfactory explanation for the peculiarities of Slovakia's evolution as a post-communist state. Some of them came to the conclusion that the existing stereotypes stemmed from preconceived methodological approaches, even unfamiliarity with the facts.² The-

¹ Abby Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), ix-xi.

² Karen Henderson, "Evaluating the Slovak Transition: What Creates the Image of Slovakia?" In *Slovakia after Communism and Mečiarism*, ed. Kieran Williams (London: School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, 2000), 26.

refore, a better understanding of what was happening in the country since its creation requires a broader historical approach.

1. Seeming and Being in the History of East and West.

The self-challenging motto of the Andrassy family of Hungarian nobles, *Non videri, sed esse* (Not Seeming but Being), which inspired medieval and early modern societies, stands in direct opposition to modern approaches to social reality that tend to place image over substance.³ In this regard small nations are at greater risk of being overlooked, even misjudged by bigger nations.⁴ While it is hardly imaginable that the views of a Slovak or a Czech scholar on the history of Great Britain, the United States or Canada would have the same resonance and impact on the international image of those countries, western scholars have scrutinized the history of Czechoslovakia and its two nations with significant consequences.⁵ This could happen since the capacity of Slovak historians to conduct independent research and publish the results during the communist era was subject to ideological indoctrination and political constraints. Moreover, Slovak historians, in contrast to their Czech colleagues, until recently did not work systematically on a conceptualization of Slovak history and the minimalization of its invisibility. Such a course would have helped to “sell” their cause abroad – the legitimacy and viability of the existence of Slovakia as a sovereign state – long after its creation. In the 1990s this gap was filled by foreign scholars and the media in a way that simplified and, in some cases, distorted the mostly unknown Slovak history waiting for its reinterpretation at home and rediscovery abroad. The Slovaks were depicted, in terms of their

³ Eva Šmelková and Július Barczy, “Andrassyovci a Rožňava,” *Forum Historiae* 2/2008, p.5. Accessed at www.forumhistoriae.sk/FH_2/smelkova.pdf

⁴ See the interview with the Norwegian publicist and writer Egil Lejon “Slovensko príkladom” on the parallels between the historical evolution of the Slovaks and the small Scandinavian nations in the 19th century. *Literárny týždenník*, August 12, 1994, pp.1 and 11.

⁵ Even large states are vulnerable to intrusions into their national histories that contradict domestic interpretations. See the internet article “Russia Will Never Let Anyone Falsify [the] History of [the] Second World War” which refers to the image of the soldiers of the Red Army in WW II as looters and rapists. Russia has created a special committee to counteract the “attempts at distorting history to the detriment of Russia’s interest.” *Pravda* (Moscow). Accessed at www.pravda.ru, May 20, 2009.

missing statehood, as a non-historic nation, which, after the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993, cured its historical complexes and democratic deficiencies at the expense of their advanced neighbors with whom they shared a common history – the Czechs and the Magyars.⁶ To that, some Slovak scholars and politicians reacted with fervor instead of providing a systemic and efficient alternative.⁷ Consequently, they created solitary and isolated interpretations of Slovak history that clashed with stereotypes and automatically brought about the risk of being viewed either as hard-core nationalists or revisionists.⁸ In the early 2000s, western scholars such as Karen Henderson, Abby Innes, Cas Mudde and others expressed their doubts concerning clichés linked to Slovak history. The progress in the re-discovery of Slovak history in the West since the beginning of the 2000s cannot be overlooked as the new generation of scholars did their fieldwork in the Slovak Republic and critically examined the earlier interpretations of Slovak history emerging in the 1990s.⁹ Although the trend of foreign and Slovak historians coming closer in their interpretations is growing, a lot of work remains to be done by both sides.¹⁰

⁶ George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 280-297 ("The Slovak case study").

⁷ Looking for internationally-known personalities with Slovak origins at any cost to improve the image of Slovakia could result in quite opposite effects. See Greg Steinmetz's article, "Slovaks desperately searching for famous countrymen," *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1996. Similarly, the publishing of another variant of the multi-volume "History of Slovakia" in the Slovak language with short résumés in German, English, French and Russian, and picture books with descriptive texts designed for common readers are hardly ways to provide a conceptual and critical synthesis of Slovak history known and accepted internationally.

⁸ František Vnuk, Milan Ďurica and other historians grouped around the *Matica slovenská*.

⁹ Next to Karen Henderson and Abby Innes, the best examples are the recent works by Tim Houghton and John A. Scherpereel cited in this article. The British scholar George Schöpflin sees a great challenge for historians of East Central Europe to become familiar with the Anglo-Saxon, German, French, Russian, and Italian scholarly literature. For consequences regarding Slovak history see George Schöpflin, "Vytváranie európskej kultúrnej identity? Stredná Európa v rozšírenej Európskej únii," *Listy SFPA*, March-April 2003, pp.2-3.

¹⁰ "...it is hardly surprising that any effort to straighten the Slovak spine is seen as nationalism, the equivalent of n[azi]sm, fascism and the oppression of minorities. It may be hard to believe but the greatest enemies of Slovakia are Slovaks themselves. On several occasions, I have had an opportunity to witness the way in which Slovak historians have given lectures on Slovakia to foreign audiences. Nearly all of

Furthermore, in the modern era the role of the media in building popular perceptions on the basis of simplified interpretations of historical developments has been increasing. A reasonable objection can be made as to why a scholarly study should be bothered by what the media say. In short, the media can popularize history more effectively than scholars who create their interpretations only after years of studying a particular problem. Thus, in creating a public image, it is the media which paints the larger picture, not scholars.¹¹ Paraphrasing Clausewitz, the media may be seen as the continuation of historiography and social science by other means.¹² This was evident in the case of Slovakia's image as hyper-nationalist in the early 1990s and during the country's quasi-miraculous instant awakening in 1998. Views by the media helped to reduce this phase in modern Slovak history to the Manichean conflict between 'evil' and 'good' politicians, and, implicitly, between the 'progressive' and 'backward' electorates and segments of Slovak society.¹³

them have had one thing in common: they present the Slovaks as a nation without a history, without culture and traditions – and surprise – as the oppressor of minorities. Nor do they neglect to mention Slovakia's fascist and Nazi past. Their spiritual kin in the West have gone so far in their blind, ignorant hatred as to blame the Slovaks for the hanging of Communists and Jews in Košice in January of 1945. According to one German commentator, the massacres in Košice were 'one of the last abominations of the fascist Slovak state and ally of Adolf Hitler.' The fact that Košice belonged to Hungary at that time and that this sad, vile act was committed by the Hungarian fascists "Wild Rose Crosses," is apparently of interest to no one, the least to our own historians." Darina Vergesová, "Dajte Ďuricovi pokoj," *Kritika & Kontext*, nos. 2-3 (1997), pp.59-60.

¹¹ "A separate chapter in our [Slovak] media is that of the methodical loss of national memory," Pavol Dinka, *Slovenské médiá: Metódy manipulácie* (Bratislava: PPA, 2008), 21. Due to its image inherited from the 1990s, Slovakia was depicted in three films – "Hostel" (2004), "Eurotrip" (2004) and "Hostel 2" (2007) – as a nest of dangerous and perverted criminals and mafia. For details see www.imdb.com

¹² On the shift of the media in the time of globalization from being the Fourth Power (provider of information) to the Fifth Power (manipulator of information) see the article by Ignacio Ramonet, "Le cinquième pouvoir," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April-Mai (2005), pp.74-78 "Dans la nouvelle guerre idéologique qu'impose la mondialisation, les médias sont utilisées comme une arme de combat. L'information, en raison de son explosion, de sa multiplication, de sa surabondance, de ses partis pris, se trouve littéralement contaminée, empoisonnée par toute sorte des mensonges, pollué par les rumeurs, les distorsions, les manipulations." Ibid., p.77.

¹³ Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví na Slovensku* (Brno: CDK, 2006), p.308. A survey conducted in Slovakia in the mid-1990s focused on the degree of tolerance towards minorities, disrespect for the law by politi-

Next to the risk of perspectives based on simplified portrayals of reality stands the problem of divergent approaches towards the same phenomena in the history of the East and West. The classic saying goes "if disease is beautiful, it is generally someone else's disease."¹⁴ Apart from its complimentary aspect, Chesterton's aphorism can be applied to nationalism and its negative characteristics associated primarily with the East. In the 1990s, the resurrected nationalism of East Central Europe gained a negative image linked to the ethnocentric nationalism of the 19th century. This resulted in the categorization of post-communist states into progressive ones and those which lagged behind. It is true that the downfall of Communism and the subsequent disintegration of the Communist Bloc resulted in an explosion of ethnic tensions. When examining the roots of nationalism and its capacity for political and social mobilization, it should become clear that the same primordial instincts attributed to the East had existed among western *literati* in the 19th century. In multi-ethnic Britain the same elements of linguistic and ethnic tensions shaped by romantic nationalism can be found in historical novels designed with the same purpose as those by writers in East Central Europe.¹⁵ The similarities between the nation-building processes in Western and East Central Europe can particularly be observed in the creation of multi-ethnic Great Britain as a political nation during the period 1707-1837, where the impact of external threats helped her to overcome the historical centripetal tendencies based on ethnic diversity.¹⁶ What worked in Great Britain did not work in Austria-

cians, positive opinions on the communist regime before its fall and engagement in civic association activities.

¹⁴ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: The Bodley Head, 1949), p.12.

¹⁵ On the Norman-Saxon ethno-linguistic division and societal hierarchy in medieval England see Sir Walter Scott's historical novel *Ivanhoe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). For the major argument of the book see the introduction, pp.1-9. See also the comparison of the Magyars with the English "who have violently Anglicized ten millions of Irishmen and Scottsman" made by a Magyar Deputy in the Hungarian Diet in 1879 in justification of the forced *Magyarization*. R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908; reprinted in New York by Howard Fertig, 1972), 217. There is a significant difference. Whereas Great Britain made, at least formally, its *Compromise* in 1707, the radical part of Magyar political elites failed to do it until it was too late.

Hungary from 1848 to 1918 and in Czechoslovakia, where centripetal tendencies eventually prevailed.

Recalling the indication by Cas Mudde of double standards in explaining 'bad' and 'good' nationalism in Slovakia during the period 1989-1992,¹⁷ nationalism, in general, appeared as progressive when it had helped to create nation-states in the West from the 16th to the 19th centuries, whereas it became perverted in state-building processes in post-communist Eastern Europe in the 1990s.¹⁸ Though the concerns of multi-ethnic states about the possible consequences of various forms of nationalism, past and future, to which modern historiography and political science have legitimately pointed, are understandable, the common roots of nationalism should not be forgotten. This will help us to avoid the traps of nationalism's general recrimination in post-communist East Central Europe, including Slovakia, regardless of the context within which it emerged and had been shaped.¹⁹

In addition to the perception of the Slovaks as intolerant nationalists, the image of the country has been that of a non-historic nation due to the viewing of unexplored parts of Slovak history as myths. Robert Pynsent suggests that a myth can appear either as a "normal neutral narrative of concern,"²⁰ or it can be a "bridge too far" in re-

¹⁷ Cas Mudde, "Civil society in post-communist Europe: Lessons from the 'dark side,'" In *Uncivil society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 161.

¹⁸ For the opposite view see Egil Lejon who sees the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993 as a result of Slovak historical traditions and an emancipation movement which accelerated in 1848 and later. Interview with Egil Lejon "Slovensko príkladom," *Literárny týždenník*, August 12, 1994, p.11. Lejon suggests that the Slovaks are not nationalistic enough in terms of what modern nationalism requires: cultural self-confidence, national pride, and loyalty.

¹⁹ See Kedourie on the selective use of the antonyms 'progressive' – 'regressive' in regard to nationalism in the Marxist interpretation of history ('progressive' during the advent of capitalism replacing feudalism, 'progressive' in the fight of colonial and post-colonial nations against imperialism, and 'regressive' within capitalism resisting socialism). Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd., 1966), 90-91. Applying Mudde's observation, the 'bad' case of nationalism in the early 1990s was the split of Czechoslovakia, whereas the 'good' cases were the dismemberments of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In contrast to the two latter, Slovak nationalism did not involve violence.

²⁰ Robert Pynsent, *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality* (Budapest-London-New York: Central European University Press, 1994), 87.

gard to its practical implications in nation and state-building processes in Slovak history as implicated by G. Eyal, S.J. Cohen and T. Haughton.²¹ While applying the first flexible definition, it may be postulated that myths are constantly emerging. An effective way to understand the essence of a myth in terms of its value as a possible source of historical facts is to compare both of its forms.

The official mythology of the European Union is that it was born out of a sudden inspiration that had fallen upon Jean Monnet – a Romulus to the European Community – during his trip to the Alps. The idea was apparently instrumental in reconciling France and Germany during the meeting of Robert Schumann and Konrad Adenauer in May of 1950, which gave birth to the European Coal and Steel Community.²² Others see this process in an all-European myth-deconstructing perspective as the outcome of the decisive involvement of the United States, tired of the French-German reluctance to reach an agreement.²³ Concurrently, some scholars have viewed the creation of the European Union in the early 1990s as the culmination of the tireless work of lobbyists, who had effectively executed the wishes of great corporations to create a common market which was about to grant the architects of the EU even greater eco-

²¹ See Gil Eyal, *The Origins of Post-Communist Elites: from the Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 131, and Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Post-Communist Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 4-5. This is also the leitmotif of Shari J. Cohen's book *Politics Without A Past: The Absence Of History In Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

²² "Chaque année, si je le peux, je vais faire de grandes courses dans les Alpes...J'y retrouve l'expression de l'inquiétude qui oppressait l'Europe cinq ans après la guerre: une autre guerre est proche devant nous si nous ne faisons rien. L'Allemagne n'en sera pas la cause, mais elle en sera l'enjeu. Il faut qu'elle cesse d'être un enjeu, qu'elle devienne au contraire un lien. Seule la France peut actuellement prendre une initiative." Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 342.

²³ John Gillingham, *Coal, Steel and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945-1955: The Germans and French from Ruhr Conflict to Economic Community* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). Particularly explicative is the role of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany John McCloy in bringing the French and Germans together to the signing of the Treaty of Paris (April 18, 1951), which instituted the European Coal and Steel Community. Gillingham stressed the fact that McCloy "summoned" the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to his office for a "dressing down" for his unwillingness to sign the document. *Ibid*, 280.

conomic profits.²⁴ A different group of authors opposed such ignoble motives with their hagiographic vision of the institutional emergence of the European Community and the later European Union as the outcome of exceptional negotiating and diplomatic skills of supranational executives who were serving the citizens of Europe.²⁵ It is clear that each perspective has its merits and this adds to the perplexing complexity of the issue and resulting interpretations.

This variety of opinions points to the core of the problem linked to the non-historicity of Slovaks and their questionable ability to cope with more recent problems in the transformation of their society. The skeptically insinuated 'mythical' legacy of 9th century Great Moravia and the invisible link from it to modern Slovak politics, apart from its distance from the present, which partially legitimizes its appearance as a myth, disregards the simple fact that to the Slovaks it was a lighthouse, not a matrix blindly to follow in the creation of a sovereign modern Slovakia. There is no difference in this regard between small and big nations who honor their historical traditions that often blend with myths. Most importantly, it is not Great Moravia itself, but the *connection* between it and the 19th and 20th centuries that matters in the discourse on the historicity of Slovaks. This link was hardly reflected, let alone examined, by western scholars in the 1990s in contrast to their predecessors – the historians R.W. Seton-Watson, Robert A. Kann, Oscar Halecki, and C.A. Macartney.²⁶ After the extinction of the Árpád dynasty (1301), which had represented the ethnic Magyars, the foreign rulers of the Kingdom of

²⁴ Belén Balanyá, Ann Doherty, Olivier Hoedeman, Adam Ma'anit and Erik Westelius, *Europe Inc.: Regional and Global Restructuring and the Rise of Corporate Power* (London-Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000). The authors stress their perception of the creation of the European Union as the result of a plan made by the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) composed of 45 captains of the largest European transnational corporations. See Preface of the book, xi-xv.

²⁵ Ken Endo, *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors. The Politics of Shared Leadership* (London: Macmillan, 1999). Helen Drake, *Jacques Delors. Perspectives on a European Leader* (London-New York: Routledge, 2000).

²⁶ For an attempt to see Slovak history in historical continuity by a foreign scholar see the chapter by the Austrian historian Arnold Suppan, "Die Slowakei zwischen Grossmährischen Reich und Europäischer Union: Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten," in *Plus Ultra. Die Welt Der Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alfred Kohler zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. F. Edelmayer, M. Fuchs, G. Heilingsetler, P. Rauscher (Münster: Aschendorf, 2008), 331-68.

Hungary – the Anjous, the Luxembourgs, the Jagiellons, the Habsburgs – were wisely and clairvoyantly tolerant towards the ethnic groups of Hungary as the state otherwise would have not survived for the next seven centuries.²⁷ Once the glory of the Kingdom of Hungary and the privileges of a political nation were attributed to one nationality (the Magyars) in the 18th and 19th centuries, there was no choice for others, who felt degraded to second-class citizens, than to nourish and strengthen their own identities – linguistic, cultural, social, and political. Paradoxically, a tendency to be suspicious of the interpretations of Slovak history as an indivisible part of the history of the Kingdom of Hungary still prevails. Until a shift in this perception happens, Slovaks may be further viewed as a non-historic entity despite empirical and heuristic evidence that testifies to their genuine participation in the societal and institutional life of the kingdom they shared with others in times when language and ethnicity meant less than social status and class affiliation.²⁸

The myth versus ‘myth’ ambiguity in the interpretations of the history of East and West testifies to the existence of a wide range of applicable perspectives and alternative interpretations. A better awareness of this ambiguity, which exists in both East and West, may help us to also understand the reasons for the ruptures in Slovak history, fractured into its *being* and *seeming*. The most visible anoma-

²⁷ Disregarding the multi-ethnic aspects and dynastic ruptures in the medieval and modern history of Hungary would be the same as excluding the early Plantagenets from the history of England due to their appearance as non-Anglo-Saxon, Franco-Norman, elements. The history of England would have to begin anew with the Tudors. The rupture *progressive* versus *regressive* (see Kedourie) in the history of the United States is observable in the interpretations of the reasons for the Civil War and its aftermath. A similar rupture (totalitarian↔democratic) exists in the history of Germany before it became a democratic state.

²⁸ “The Slovaks on their side lost their national existence [after the defeat of Great Moravia] in that of their Asiatic conquerors, entered into their ranks as soldiers, and participated thence-forward in all their fortunes...Their language however is the only remnant of their national existence which the Slovaks have preserved; in every other respect they belong to the Hungarian nation, of which they form an ingredient part, as the Magyars form another; and on the glory of whose valiant deeds they have an equal claim.” Therese Albertine Louise von Jacob Robinson, *Historical View of the Language and Literature of the Slavic Nation* (New York: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2006) (Reprint of the original version published by George P. Putnam in New York in 1851), 186-7.

lies of this split consequently appeared either as 'betrayals' or 'awakenings.'

2. Seeming and Being in Slovak History as a Part of the History of Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

In 1991 Slovak historian Anton Hrnko pointed out that the book by Slovak politician Ivan Dérer on the rulings of the National Court in the First Czechoslovak Republic,²⁹ written from the perspective of an ardent unitarist and "Czechoslovak," was conveniently accepted by Marxist historiography. The reason was obvious as the adversary was the same – the Slovak autonomist movement and the legacy of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939-1945). Having provided statistical data on the topics of the studies published by Slovak historians, Hrnko argued that the history of interwar Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) belonged to one of its most ideologically distorted segments.³⁰ This vacuum was filled by the works of court historians who helped to create myths as the politically and ideologically "subjective projection of desirable horizons."³¹ If a 'myth' could emerge relatively recently with plenty of primary documents, one can ask the question - are there more of them? To respond to it at least in part, it is necessary to return to the early 1990s, when ideological constraints were removed from scholarship and academia and the attention of scholars and media turned towards nationalism.

Miroslav Hroch's classification of nationalities in East Central Europe on their advancement in the national reawakening, which was published in the year when Czechoslovakia broke up, put the Slovaks a step behind the Czechs and the Magyars, without providing details, except for a very general reference.³² This article suggests that, until the revolution of 1848, Slovaks did not lag behind

²⁹ Ivan Dérer, *Slovenský vývin a ľudácka zrada* (Praha: Kvasnička a Hampl, 1946).

³⁰ Anton Hrnko, "Zatemnené dejiny: Obraz medzivojnovej slovenskej spoločnosti v prácach slovenských historikov," *Literárny týždenník*, June 28, 1991, p.10.

³¹ Marianna Oravcová, "The Ethnic and Cultural Dimension of National Emancipation: The Evocation of the Slovak Nation," in *Language, Values and the Slovak Nation*, eds. Tibor Pichler and Jana Gašparíková (Washington: Paideia Press, 1994), 11. In the last sentence Oravcová refers to the article by Pavol Horváth, "K niektorým otázkam historických tradícií na Slovensku," *Slovenský národopis* 1-2 (1986), 60-65.

³² Miloslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," *New Left Review*, I/198 (March-April 1993), 64.

the Czechs in terms of the press, programs, the creation of a literary language and the petition movements. Hroch was more accurate when pointing to the forced *Magyarization* that started after 1867 as a major hindrance to Slovak national progress, including its social and economic aspects. Yet even that historical period has to be re-examined as it had not been a time of complete silence, although it would be convenient to see it in that way.

Communist historiography in the 1950s gladly embraced the earlier idea that Slovaks had been saved by the Czechs from extinction as a nation, a concept which slipped into western scholarship. This hypothesis was based on censuses which showed the decreasing number of Slovak intelligentsia and schools as the 19th century progressed. These scholars concluded that the Slovaks would have been assimilated by the Magyars in one or two generations.³³ There had previously been two generations of Slovaks living under *Magyarization* from 1875 to 1914, yet the Slovak press, though under censorship and constant pressure, was full of political articles and calls for national, social and cultural progress.³⁴ Magyar elites knew very well that Slovak identity did not depend solely on schooling in their native language, but also on the family environment. Therefore, they forcibly took Slovak children from poor families and transported them to regions where Magyar was spoken.³⁵ The unrest in Turiec and Zvolen County in Central Slovakia that led to attacks on local Magyar authorities was a mixture of social and national elements. They testified to the continuing, even increasing Slovak resilience against *Magyarization* as observed by R. W. Seton-Watson.³⁶ Final-

³³ For an argument against the traditional view that the Slovaks could not create their intelligentsia because of harsh *Magyarization* see Dušan Kováč, Roman Holec, Elena Jakešová, Elena Mannová, Milan Podrimavský, *Na začiatku storočia, 1901-1914* (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), 44.

³⁴ Milan Krajčovič, "Slováci v emancipačnom pohybe nemeďarských národov," in *Slovensko na začiatku storočia: Spoločnosť, štát a národ v súradniciach doby*, eds. Milan Podrimavský and Dušan Kováč (Bratislava: Hú SAV, 1999), 48-65.

³⁵ "By the Law of 1891, the State has deliberately assumed the attitude of the Sultans in earlier centuries. Just as the Christian rayah was regarded as a breeding-machine to supply janissaries, so to-day non-Magyars of Hungary are breeding-machines whose children must be taught Magyar from the earliest age in the hope that they may become renegades to the traditions of their ancestors." R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary*, 222.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 394. Seton-Watson stressed that 92.5% of the Liptov county inhabitants were Slovaks and 90.6% understood no Magyar. *Ibid.*, 332.

ly, in 1918, it was the masses of peasants and lower strata of Slovak society that had preserved, as Ismo Nurmi suggested, a high degree of self-consciousness.³⁷ They were instrumental in embracing the idea of their future coexistence with the Czechs under the provisions of the Pittsburgh Agreement, but under no circumstances with the Magyars. Without this support the few intellectuals at home and abroad could hardly have reached their political goals in October and November of 1918 when the Czechoslovak Republic was born.

It is equally true that significant numbers of Slovak *Magyarones* gave up their ethnicity for the sake of their careers while following the example of the Slovak nobility and gentry which were “easily and gladly” *Magyarized* in the 19th century.³⁸ Still, it is hard to believe that three million Slovaks at home and abroad, with the most resistant of them in North America, would have been completely *Magyarized* even if Hungary had been preserved in its prewar boundaries. A possible analogy with the Irish resistance, underscored by the role played in national emancipation by leaders such as Milan R. Štefánik and Štefan Osuský, who left Hungary and vehemently fought for the Slovak cause abroad, comes to mind. Their work, done at the highest political and diplomatic levels, was supplemented by dozens of zealous Slovak national activists in the United States.³⁹

³⁷ Ismo Nurmi, *Slovakia – A Playground for Nationalism and National Identity, 1918-1920: Manifestations of the National Identity of Slovaks* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999), 45.

³⁸ C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors. The Treaty of Trianon and its Consequences 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 91.

³⁹ The Slovak press in North America – 30 newspapers with a circulation of 150,000 in 1914 – was such a force that the Hungarian government as early as in 1890 had banned the imports of some of them and began subsidizing pro-Hungarian publications in the United States. M. Mark Stolarik, “The Slovak-American Press,” in Sally M. Miller ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 365. Count Albert Apponyi, one of the main protagonists of *Magyarization* and a representative of the Hungarian government on his visit to the United States attempted to present Hungary as a free and democratic country. He was denounced as a tyrant and pressed by a huge mob comprising members of “Slavic nationalities and Hungarian socialists” during his lectures. In Chicago, Apponyi escaped the fury of the mob and fled to his car only with the protection provided by the police. See *The New York Times*, February 25, 1911, p. 3. For the Slovak resistance against the territorial aspirations of fascist Hungary see the boastful statement by Gustáv Husák on February 28, 1945: “I openly declare that Slovakia’s frontiers [with Hungary] as they had existed in the [pre-war] Czechoslovak Republic are stable. Slovakia is united and non-divisible. Any

After World War II, Konštantín Čulen, a Slovak publicist in exile, suggested that living with the Czechs was for the Slovaks a rather negative experience.⁴⁰ Čulen's arguments were based on the constant rejection of Slovak autonomy in Czechoslovakia by President Edvard Beneš, who had never shown any particular affection for the Slovaks, and the post-war execution of Msgr. Jozef Tiso, President of the wartime Slovak Republic. With the situation of the Slovaks in southern Slovakia ceded to Hungary by the Vienna Award of November 1938 in mind, it is legitimate to assume that cohabitation with the Czechs, though far from being idyllic, included fewer risks for the completion of Slovak national emancipation than their hypothetical existence in Hungary after WW I. Furthermore, the Czechs in 1918 were already significantly ahead of the Slovaks as far as societal cohesion and socio-economic progress of their societies were concerned. The animosity started with the Czech disrespect toward the Catholic Church and with their disregard for the continuing socio-economic underdevelopment of Slovakia. The problem became acute in the 1930s, when the Slovak intelligentsia, which had remarkably increased by that time, as well as ordinary citizens, could not find work in Slovakia because the best jobs were filled by the Czechs. In contrast to the situation that had existed in the 1920s, Slovaks were ready to become executives, administrators, teachers, lawyers and doctors. This happened in 1939 and after. Unfortunately, after WW II Czech political leaders, both civic and communist, were not willing to admit that the Slovaks had grown up and were able to govern themselves.⁴¹

The Czech historical experience was strongly influenced by the Protestant Reformation, secularism and greater industrial advancement due to their proximity to and cohabitation with the Germans. With the creation of Czechoslovakia after WW I, the Czechs proved themselves worthy followers of their predecessors and for a moment

irredentism by Magyar fascists will end in vain. Our nation, which has been able to resist the military power of Germany, will find enough strength to firmly defend its borders." See the document "Z referátu Gustáva Husáka na konferencii Komunistickej strany Slovenska," February 28, 1945. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti II* (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998), 400.

⁴⁰ Konštantín Čulen, *Po Svätoplukovi druhá naša hlava: Politický životopis Dr. Jozefa Tisu* (Cleveland: The First Catholic Slovak Union, 1947).

⁴¹ Carol Skalník Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: the Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 89.

also a barrier erected by the victorious Allies against German domination over Central and Eastern Europe. After the incorporation of Slovakia into Czechoslovakia, the national self-confidence of the Czechs was on the rise. After WW II, the Czechs led by the Communist Party, and with the mighty Soviet Union backing them, returned to the concept of a unitary Czechoslovakia. To them, the push for reforms in the 1960's, which was interpreted as the "Prague" rather than the "Czecho-Slovak Spring," was also a return to their national history. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in August of 1968, led by the Soviet Union, their former liberator, and the only Slavic Superpower, was especially traumatic for the Czechs.

This trauma, imposed from outside, was complemented by a domestic one: the effects of 'normalization' and federalization, both seen as a part of the chain of Slovak "betrayals." The Slovaks rebelled from 1920 onward. First, they asked for autonomy, then they allegedly "conspired" with the Magyars and the Poles against the pre-war Republic, and eventually got a taste of the forbidden fruit of political emancipation in the form of their nominally independent state.⁴² Meanwhile, in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939-1945), the Czechs were ruled over and persecuted by the Germans.⁴³ With this perception of national history in Czech minds, the disappearance of the communist regime in 1989, which was allegedly harsher in the Czech Lands than in Slovakia, and which treated the Slovaks in the same way as did the First Czechoslovak Republic, was a golden opportunity to rebuild the state to Czech expectations. After recognizing that Slovaks were not willing to accept what they considered to be the continuation of the imbalance in the distribution of competences in a joint state in 1990-1992, the Czechs opted for the territorially-reduced variant of Czechoslovakia while inheriting its trademark. Since then, they have fared very well.⁴⁴ It

⁴² Leff, *National Conflict*, 26 and 164. For a Slovak perspective on the history of the Slovak-Czech and Czecho-Slovak relations since 1918 as the "history of broken pacts and unfulfilled promises," see Anton Hrnko, "Politické zápasy na Slovensku v lete a na jeseň 1990," *Historický zborník* 10, no.1 (2000), 77.

⁴³ Though the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia had its own administration, it was an indivisible part of the Third Reich, which saw itself as a historic successor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation.

⁴⁴ See the article "Slovakia's Economy Is Doing Well, Too" by Peter Burian, *The New York Times*, June 1, 1996. The author, *chargé d'affaires* of the Embassy of the

may seem that this chapter of their history was closed and sealed. The aftermath of the "Velvet Divorce" and the relationship between the two former federal nations was not always rosy.

Throughout the 1990s, it was not difficult to contrast the progress made by the Czech Republic with Slovakia's problems. In the early 2000s, with the Mečiar era gone and economic advancement that surprised many, the previous negative image of Slovaks as nationalists turned to the delay in democratic transformation of their society.⁴⁵ In recent books on Czech history since the early medieval era the Slovaks are hardly mentioned. With Slovakia's progress in the integration processes, substitutes for Slovak nationalism appeared instantly.⁴⁶ Despite mutual sympathies as documented by surveys of public opinion and praise by Slovak and Czech politicians of their good relations, from 1993 onward free of economic quarrels,⁴⁷ the clash of bitter memories continued. They have ranged from topics such as investment opportunities by renowned international compa-

Slovak Republic in Washington, responded to a similar article in the *NYT* on the Czech Republic doing well "with luck and without Slovakia," while providing data on GDP (7.4% growth), unemployment (7.4%), doubled foreign currency reserves, a positive trade balance and low foreign debt per capita (\$800.00).

⁴⁵ According to Professor Filip Palda from *L'École nationale d'administration publique* in Montreal, "Separation in 1992 allowed the Czechs to halt the payola on which Slovaks had come to depend. Since separation in 1992, the Slovaks have gone the way of Argentina, whereas the Czechs are now preparing to enter the European Union." See "Argentina north" by Filip Palda. *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 21, 2002. Anton Hykisch, former Slovak ambassador to Canada, opined that, for Hungary and the Czech Republic, Slovakia's economic success in the early 2000s was a big surprise which was hard for them to accept. Author interview with Anton Hykisch, Bratislava, June 5, 2007.

⁴⁶ For a contrasting view on the political systems and parliamentarism in the Czech and Slovak Republics as advanced and less developed see Petr Kopecký, *Parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics: Party competition and parliamentary institutionalization* (London: Ashgate, 2001). The Czech political scientist Lubomir Kopeček opines that in comparison with the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, the evolution of the Slovak political system is unfinished and the system itself is unstable. As a result, Slovakia is a "semi-consolidated democracy." Lubomír Kopeček, *Demokracie, diktatury a politické stranictví stranictví na Slovensku* (Brno: CDK, 2006), 307 and 310.

⁴⁷ See the article "Klaus: Vzťahy Slovenska a Česka môžu byť príkladom pre celú Európu," *Pravda*, June 29, 2009. It became a tradition that the first official visits of the newly-elected presidents and prime ministers of the Czech and Slovak Republics have been with their closest neighbor.

nies,⁴⁸ to the often derogatory comments on domestic politics and rivalry in sports, with frequent references to the “sins” in national histories of the two nations.⁴⁹

Until the revolutionary years 1848-1849, Slovaks and Magyars had cohabitated peacefully. Four decades of forced *Magyarization* after 1867 were hard for the Slovaks, yet there was still some moral and socio-political capital left for the improvement of mutual relationships. If this failed in 1918, Slovaks could hardly have been blamed for it as their political weight and influence in Hungary was marginal. In the fall of 1938, after two decades of the existence of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia was stripped of its southern territories by the Vienna Award.⁵⁰ Almost seven years of living in Hungary (1938-1945) returned the Slovaks in the south to a life which resembled what had existed before 1918. After the Second World War and until 1989, the relationship between the Slovaks and Magyars might have appeared as normal, but it was not. Once the Soviet Union was gone and the fate of Czechoslovakia disputed, the old animosities resurfaced. For all Slovak governments since 1989, the status of the Magyar minority became a litmus test in measuring the state of democracy in Slovakia by western governments and scholars. During the Mečiar years, Magyars in Slovakia voiced their dissatisfaction with

⁴⁸ According to a poll by the Czech Private Equity and Venture Capital Association based in Prague, four out of five of its economists and financial analysts said that foreign investment would flow to the Czech rather than to the Slovak Republic. See “Investori uprednostnia Česko pred Slovenskom,” *Sme*, May 29, 2009. Slovak readers rejected the idea as wishful thinking on the Czech side and suggested that a poll conducted by a Slovak-based company would have shown the opposite.

⁴⁹ They frequently appear on the Czech web sites www.seznam.cz, www.idnes.cz and their Slovak counterparts www.sme.sk and www.pravda.sk. On April 1 of 2009 when the Slovak national football team defeated its opponent in Prague in the qualifier for the World Cup in South Africa (2010), debates among the fans of both teams turned to their common past with references to the “betrayal” in 1938-1939 and to the Slovak inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Czechs. Slovaks pointed to Czech compliance with German rule in the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia and affirmed that they did not measure themselves against the Czechs – a fixed idea on the Czech side.

⁵⁰ Július Mésároš, “Some Deformations in the Interpretation of Censuses in Recent Slovak-Magyar Controversies,” In *Slovak & Magyars*, ed. Pavol Števček (Bratislava: Ministerstvo kultúry, 1995), 63-84. The census of 1910 showed the presence of 885,397 Magyars on the territory which became part of Slovakia in 1918 (30.3% of the population). Mésároš argues that even “this number was not the result of natural development, or Slovak-Magyar and Magyar-Slovak bilingualism, but a result of the purposeful Magyarization and oppression of Slovaks.” *Ibid.*, 78.

the approaches of Slovak governments in administrative, linguistic, financial and cultural matters. Claims made by their leaders for more tolerance and understanding by the Slovaks have been in stark contrast with the ambiguous language of the representatives of the Magyar minority regarding their possible autonomy.⁵¹

While the Slovaks and the Czechs after 1992 were able to reach the highest level of mutual respect and understanding, Slovaks and Magyars remained mentally anchored in the period between 1918 and 1945. The trauma of Trianon in 1920 and their expulsion from South Slovakia in 1945-1947 is deeply engraved in the minds of Magyars, as is the forced *Magyarization* and the effects of the Vienna Arbitration in the minds of the Slovaks. Each side continues to interpret the causes and outcomes of those events according to its own perception and sentiments. A partial solution to the problem – history textbooks written by Slovak and Magyar historians together – is to this date still “in progress” and it is hard to predict when and if they will ever be finished and distributed to schools in both countries.⁵²

History is firmly tied into daily politics in East Central Europe. Its revival outside of scholarly conferences and seminars and its use as a model for the present or future by politicians may lead to the release of a genie from his bottle.⁵³ This refers particularly to Slovakia as being possibly identified as the weakest link within an informal *Little Entente*.⁵⁴ If both nations do not want to waste what has

⁵¹ The representatives of the Magyar political parties in Slovakia (before 1998), with the exception of Miklós Duray and Pál Csáky from the SMK (the Party of the Magyar Coalition), were careful about publicly speaking of autonomy for Magyars in Slovakia, though the idea of their political and administrative autonomy has frequently appeared – *sotto voce* – as their ultimate goal. Most recently, Duray admitted that territorial autonomy is unrealistic, but the chance for a vaguely defined “personal” autonomy for the Magyar minority in Slovakia still exists. See the article “Duray o veľkom Maďarsku nesnáva, autonómia je však podľa neho reálna,” *Pravda*, August 4, 2009.

⁵² Vilám Kratochvíl, “K možnostiam oslabovania predsudkov a stereotypov v tvorbe učebníc dejepisu,” in *Mýty a predsudky v dejinách. Historická konferencia 7. decembra 2004*, ed. Attila Simon (Šamorín-Dunajská Streda: Forum Inštitút pre výskum menšín, 2005).

⁵³ See the interview with Slovak historian Ivan Kamenec. “Kamenec: Politici sú najhorší žiaci histórie,” *Sme*, May 9, 2009. Kamenec refers to the diverging interpretations of the period 1944-1948.

⁵⁴ Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, in which Magyar minorities live. Ján Čarnogurský said that the highest challenge to Slovakia’s foreign policy after accession into NATO and the EU remains the country’s ability to face continuing interference by

remained positive from the legacy of their peaceful cohabitation, and if they wish to get rid of the shadows of the past, they have to reach a mutually respectful Slovak – Magyar and Magyar – Slovak *Compromise*. Not by political gestures, but by the inner force of their societies. Neither of the two nations, closely bound together for centuries, can separately pass this test of national and civic maturity.⁵⁵

3. The Myth of a Sudden Awakening of Slovak Society in the 1998 Parliamentary Elections.

The major problem in Slovak history from an outsider's perspective - its invisibility linked to a fragmented appearance as a part of the history of Hungary and Czechoslovakia – influenced also its recent domestic interpretations. In reference to the Slovak national anthem, sociologists Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová compared Slovak society in 1989 to "Sleeping Beauty."⁵⁶ They went so far as to say that "...in November 1989, an overwhelming majority of people in Slovakia accepted political change passively." This view is similar to those that refer to "socialism with a human face" in the second half of the 1960s as a purely Czech affair,⁵⁷ and those that see Char-

right-wing Magyar politicians into Slovakia's domestic affairs through issues regarding the status of the Magyar minority in Slovakia. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007. In a poll conducted in January of 2004, 21.3% of participants identified Hungary as a major threat to Slovak national security. See Boris Benkovič, "Výskumná správa," in *Verejná mienka a politika. Medzinárodné vzťahy a zahraničná politika Slovenskej republiky*, ed. Miroslav Pekník (Bratislava: Veda, 2005), 38 (see Graph 9).

⁵⁵ For the necessity for mutual respect between the Slovak majority and minorities that would lead to their loyalty to the state based on civic principles see Milan Zemko, "Moderný politický národ," in *Slovenská otázka dnes*, ed. László Szigeti (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2007), 192. Zemko refers to Renan's idea of a "nation as a daily plebiscite" in a continuous building of a Slovak political nation: "L'existence d'une nation est...plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est affirmation perpétuelle de vie." Ernest Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882. *Oeuvres complètes d'Ernest Renan* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, editor, 1882), 27.

⁵⁶ Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, "Slovakia's Democratic Awakening," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 1 (1999), 80.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 83. See Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulbricht K. Preuss, *Institutional design in post-communist societies: rebuilding the ship at sea* (Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The authors came to the conclusion that "The 1968 vision of socialism with a human face was entirely a Czech, not Slovak phenomenon." Ibid., 264.

ter 77 as the only agent of civic resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Earlier observations by Karen Henderson point to preconceived approaches to Slovak history suffering from “dangerous analytical misconceptions that have to work backward.”⁵⁸ Theories on the institution-building processes in communist and post-communist Czechoslovakia view the institutions emerging during the transitory period as a result of *bricolage* – the innovative building of new institutions by politicians who function as *bricoleurs*.⁵⁹ A similar approach can be taken when examining the most important moments in the modern history of Slovakia and their contrasting interpretations seen in “bricks.”

Works by political scientists are often based on deductive reasoning (see the scheme’s *Bricolage I*, at the end of the article). Thus, if Slovakia deviated from its course towards western democracies in the mid-1990s (originally Brick A), the explanation was obvious: it happened because of the country’s past, bound by the immaturity of its society following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, which stemmed from pervasive Slovak nationalism. This led to ungratefulness towards the Czechs and revenge towards the Magyars (Brick B). Likewise, it has been argued that a high degree of compliance with the communist regime and its detrimental impact on Slovak society kept societal life frozen (Brick C). Moreover, the weak economic base of Slovakia inherited from Hungary, along with the controversial character and legacy of wartime Slovakia (Brick D), did not help to eliminate the socio-economic backwardness, political inexperience of Slovaks and thus their negative international image (Brick E).

Deductive reasoning has its merits. It is even more convincing when supported by direct experience and contact with the subject of the study, buttressed by familiarity with primary sources. Foreign scholars who did their research in Slovakia in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, helped to broaden a variety of perspectives on Slovak history, which Slovak historians themselves have been unaware of. It is interesting to observe that western, not Slovak scholars, argue in favor of the capacity of Slovak society to build new institu-

⁵⁸ Karen Henderson, “Evaluating the Slovak Transition: What Creates the Image of Slovakia?” 26.

⁵⁹ John A. Scherpereel, *Governing the Czech Republic and Slovakia: Between State Socialism and the European Union* (Boulder - London: First Forum Press, 2009), 68.

tions during the communist and post-communist era (Scherpereel, Haughton). Foreign scholars have referred to the importance of a "critical mass of educated citizens" and political stability in Slovakia prior to, during and after the "change" in 1998 (Henderson), and stressed the presence of a "profound and sizeable Slovak opposition to the culture of Communism" (A. Innes), whilst sociologists and political scientists at home (S. Szomolányi, O. Gyárfášová, Z. Bútorová, J. Marušiak) have been more skeptical.

From a long-term historical perspective based on inductive reasoning, the context and nuances of Slovakia's post-communist transformation appear significantly different from a micro perspective as applied by the social sciences. This perspective suggests that, to understand the evolution of Slovak society with all its accomplishments and failures, the key is to start from the beginning, not from the end or the middle, and not by theories and generalizations, but with facts, particularly in contested perspectives. Interpretations based on deductive reasoning may result, and they often did, in theories on and explanations of the reasons for the still continuing building of the Slovak political nation and democracy in the country as an "unfinished business," turning it into "the hare versus turtle" race. Such perspectives attribute nationalism in the 1990s exclusively to the Slovaks, while ignoring the fears of Slovak society stemming from its historical experience, linked to the years 1867-1918, 1918-1919, 1938-1939, 1945-1948 and after.

Moreover, such perspectives suffer from inner contradictions. Despite the partly beneficial impact of Czechoslovakia on Slovakia, the latter was in 1993, similar to the years 1918, 1938-1939 as well as during communist Czechoslovakia, socio-economically a less developed part of the common state.⁶⁰ Likewise, the Slovak political experience in prewar Czechoslovakia has been seen as weak due to the detrimental impact of a different and underdeveloped political culture inherited by the Slovaks from Hungary, for which two decades of the existence of democratic Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) was too a short period to improve.⁶¹ Consequently, due to the traditional "historic deficits" in the evolution of Slovak society, its civic attitu-

⁶⁰ Miroslav Londák, "K niektorým problémom ekonomického vývoja na Slovensku na prahu roka 1968," *Historické štúdie* 44 (2006), p.188.

⁶¹ Kopeček, 27-34 and 311.

des linked to pluralism during Communism did not develop properly.⁶²

This perspective does seem not to apply to Slovakia's neighbors, the Magyars and the Poles, with their limited experience with parliamentary democracy before and after WW II, which were similar to Spain and Italy in the West. Hungary and Poland apparently redeemed themselves in the eyes of the West by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the activities of the Solidarity Movement in Poland from 1980 onward. The question, however, is how could those events of undisputed civic bravery substitute for democracy as a system of governance that needs time to develop? By contrast, the long-lasting non-compliance of Slovak society with the communist regime, as demonstrated by repeated large-scale participation in religious pilgrimages and demonstrations, has either been downplayed or referred to as having had no impact on politics in communist Czechoslovakia.⁶³

After the 1998 parliamentary elections, Slovak sociologists and leaders of the non-governmental sector helped to create and spread a positive image of Slovak society by contrasting the Mečiar era with the progress made in integration with western organizations during the two Dzurinda governments.⁶⁴ They suggested that the electoral behavior of voters in rural and economically underdeveloped regions, who voted in favor of the Movement for a Democratic Slo-

⁶² Based on a survey conducted in May of 1968, in which 69.5% of the respondents in the Czech Lands as compared with 54.6% in Slovakia supported the existence of more political parties. At the same time, 53% of Czech participants saw positively the role of civic associations in political life, while in Slovakia it was only 32%. Kopeček, 143.

⁶³ Kopeček stresses the continuity in Czech dissent linked to the reform movement in the 1960s and the role of Charter 77, which was signed by 1800 Czechs in comparison with two dozen Slovaks as the flag bearer of civic resistance against Communism in Czechoslovakia. Kopeček, p.145. Ján Čarnogurský vigorously opposes the assumption that religious dissent in Slovakia had a limited impact on the regime. According to him, the massive pilgrimages to Velehrad and Levoča helped to soften the harassment of dissenters and citizens by communist authorities. Author interview with Ján Čarnogurský, Bratislava, May 24, 2007. On a similar stance taken by Abby Innes see her book *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 36-37.

⁶⁴ Such delineation is, technically, an anachronism, as the third Mečiar government did not oppose integration, particularly into the EU, though it eventually brought Slovakia into international isolation.

vakia (HZDS) led by Vladimír Mečiar and the Slovak National Party (SNS),⁶⁵ resembled support for the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (the *Ľudáks*) during the wartime Slovak Republic. In contrast to their earlier suggestions, these observers view positively the ability of Magyar communities in Slovakia, which live in rural areas and cast their votes exclusively for the Magyar political parties in each election⁶⁶ while referring to it as a "higher form of civic participation and social engagement."⁶⁷

Inductive reasoning provides the reader with the opportunity to view Slovakia's post-communist transformation in a complex, evolutionary perspective (see the scheme's *Bricolage II*): It consists of the following "bricks:"

Brick A – "Antecedents" (1848-1918).

The traditional view is that during and after the Revolutions of 1848-1849, Slovaks were aware that Magyars were not willing to allow them to exist autonomously and, hence, they started to design their political programs, build institutions, schools, and political parties. Fearing *Panslavism*, Magyar radicals attempted to *Magyarize* the nationalities in Hungary, including the Slovaks, with some success (*Magyarones*). As a consequence, some Slovak, mostly Pro-

⁶⁵ The SNS, which, next to the Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH) in the early 1990s and the HZDS in the mid-1990s was also compared with the HSES, has always been supportive of the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising in stark contrast to the perspective of the *Ľudáks* and the *neo-Ľudáks*. The same holds for the HZDS.

⁶⁶ Next to the SMK, a new party to represent both Magyars and Slovaks named the *Most-Híd* (The Bridge; Slovak and Magyar), was established in July of 2009. Its chairman became Béla Bugár, the former chairman of the SMK, who lost to Pál Csáky in the party elections in April of 2007. See "Ministerstvo vnútra zaregistrovalo Bugárovu stranu," *Pravda*, July 3, 2009. In the 2010 parliamentary elections another new political party, Freedom and Solidarity [SaS] appeared, and supplied ministers to the Radičová government but also caused it to collapse in October of 2011. Only recently established parties are: *Obyčajní ľudia - nezávislé osobnosti* (Ordinary People - Independent Personalities), *Strana slobodné slovo* (The Free Word Party), and 99% - *Občiansky hlas* (99% - A Citizen's Voice).

⁶⁷ See the article "Maďari sú aktívnejší než Slováci, tvrdí prieskum," *Sme*, March 28 2009. The article refers to a survey conducted by the Slovak Academy of Sciences and its interpretation by Zora Bútorová from the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), a non-governmental think-tank. Slovak Magyars defending their rights, while keeping their traditions and the cohesiveness of their society intact, is praised as a positive quality. The same was not applied to the Slovaks in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia when they tried to do the same.

testant, intellectuals, opted for cultural, and possibly political, cooperation with the Czechs. A majority of Slovaks, mostly Catholics, still believed that a solution for Slovakia within Hungary could be found. The period from 1890 to 1914, which was traditionally seen as the “dark ages” of Slovak national emancipation, brought about even more resilience against *Magyarization*. In October of 1918, the Slovaks joined the Czechs in a common state. They rejected the offer by the Károlyi government for autonomy within Hungary. From November of 1918 onward, a series of military clashes occurred between Magyar and Czechoslovak troops. In June of 1919 the Hungarian Red Army invaded and occupied eastern and southern Slovakia for a short time.

Difference (traditional views↔the article): Slovaks were socially and politically active, not passive in Hungary, even during the time of the harshest *Magyarization* in 1890-1914, which coincided with the process of the formation of the Slovaks as a political nation. During and after WW I, Slovak leaders abroad and at home decided to join the Czechs in the new state of Czechoslovakia on the assumption they would receive autonomy as promised by the Pittsburgh Agreement of 1918. At the same time, the Slovak population demonstrated its strong dissatisfaction with the Magyar government and supported secession from Hungary by protests in which social and national aspects blended.

Brick B – “Betrayals” (1918-1948).

In prewar Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks were divided between the autonomists and the “Czechoslovaks.” In this clash the Catholic-Protestant controversy played an important role. Though the autonomists were seen in the Czech Lands as the destroyers of Czechoslovakia, they did not want to secede because they were afraid of territorial revisionism by the Poles and the Magyars. After Munich, Slovak political parties congregated in Žilina and expressed their support for Slovak autonomy within the rump second Czecho-Slovak Republic. The government of the nominally independent wartime Slovak Republic discriminated against and failed to protect its Jewish and Roma citizens from deportation to death camps. In the administrative and economic spheres, however, the Slovaks demonstrated their capacity to form a state and administer it themselves. Based on this experience, Slovak Communists, who had helped to

organize the Slovak National Uprising in 1944, expected Slovakia to receive autonomous status within the reconstituted Czechoslovakia. This was rejected by Czech presidents Edvard Beneš, Klement Gottwald and Antonín Novotný.

Difference: Slovaks were stereotyped in the Czech Lands as traitors since the 1920s. The fact that they did not want to secede from Czechoslovakia and remained in the second Czecho-Slovak Republic for half a year has been frequently overlooked. The socio-economic progress made by the wartime Slovak Republic, in contrast with the disinterest in Slovak affairs by previous centralist Czechoslovak governments, was significant. In May of 1946, the Communists were defeated in parliamentary elections in Slovakia, but not in the Czech Lands. By November of 1947, the Communists gained political control over Slovakia. The three Prague Agreements were viewed by the Slovaks as a betrayal, just as the Czechs viewed the aftermath of the Munich Agreement.

Brick C – “Communism” (1948-1989).

The idea of Slovak autonomy and economic equalization with the Czechs was adopted by Slovak Communists. The demand for reforming Communism in Slovakia grew with the accession to power in 1963 of the Slovak Alexander Dubček. The return to national history and the drive for economic reform resulted in the idea of the federalization of Czechoslovakia. This was interpreted by the Czech side as a continuation of Slovak nationalism, because the debate in the Czech Lands was oriented towards political pluralism and economic reform. In 1969 came the removal of Dubček, who was caught between the need for reform at home and the mistrust in him by political leaders of other communist countries. He was replaced by Gustáv Husák, another Slovak, who embodied ‘normalization.’ Whereas Czechs intellectuals voiced their dissatisfaction with the Husák regime, Slovaks, allegedly, were compliant with it.

Difference: Slovaks were no less active than the Czechs in initiating the reform movement in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s; in fact, they had helped to start it. Economic reform as a continuation of equalization stood in the forefront of the efforts of Slovak communist political leaders as well as economists. Federalization was important in regard to both political and economic competencies, whilst it was viewed by Czech society as another from of archetypal nation-

nal reassertion of the Slovaks resembling the 19th century. Slovak society lived in a paradoxical situation: next to the material benefits received during 'normalization,' the traditionally religious Slovaks reacted to ideological indoctrination by massive participation in religious pilgrimages. In addition to the religious dissenters, who were active already in the 1970s, environmentalists began to play an important role in the early 1980s in making also the secular part of Slovak society aware of the risks stemming from insensitive industrialization. In 1989, Slovak society as a whole, and on its own initiative, rejected the communist regime by massive demonstrations against it.

Brick D – "Division" (1993-1997).

The "Velvet Revolution," similar to the "Prague Spring," indicated, how the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia was perceived internationally. From the beginning, there was mistrust between the newly-emerging Slovak and Czech political elites. Each had its own symbol: they were Alexander Dubček in Slovakia and Václav Havel in the Czech Lands. Since the former accepted the rather symbolic post of Speaker of the Federal Assembly in Prague, new political leaders emerged instantly in Slovakia, first and foremost Vladimír Mečiar. In contrast to its federal partner, Slovakia had two more tasks: 1) to gain international recognition and 2) to deal with the status of the Magyar minority. Fighting on three fronts (the third were federal competences) simultaneously, Slovak politicians were divided. Eventually, it was the HZDS, led by Mečiar, which prevailed. Contrary to its portrayal as anti-federalist and nationalist, the HZDS and its leader still aspired for a looser federation with the Czechs. This was unacceptable to the "technocrats," represented by Václav Klaus and Czech nationalists such as Miroslav Macek (both Civic Democratic Party; ODS) and Jan Kalvoda (Civic Democratic alliance; ODA). As a result, Slovak and Czech political leaders opted for the dissolution of Czechoslovakia as of December 31, 1992.

Difference: In contrast to the traditional perspectives that interpret renewed Slovak efforts for building an "authentic federation" in the early 1990s at the expense of the Czechs, it is suggested that Slovaks wanted more powers in order to avoid the continuation of debates of constitutional discrepancies and socio-economic disparities that had started in the 1930s, continued in 1960s, and resurfaced at

the end of the communist regime in the late 1980s. Since the Czechs had controlled Czechoslovakia for decades, regardless of its constitutional form, they interpreted their own nationalism as “civicness,” in contrast to the allegedly old-fashioned ethnic Slovak nationalism.

Brick E – “Europe” (“The Awakening” and the “Change,” 1998-2004).

Since Slovaks were seen as passive in communist Czechoslovakia and their religious dissent was allegedly insignificant in terms of challenging the communist regime, new institutions and political parties had to emerge in the early 1990s. During the period 1990-1992, Slovaks allegedly once again focused on federal and national competencies, instead of building democracy and a market economy, which were Czech priorities. According to some sociologists, Slovakia missed the chance to experience its own Velvet Revolution. After the creation of independent Slovakia, the state had to re-build its structures and to strive for international recognition. It inherited a sensitive problem with the Magyar minority, which resulted in tensions regarding the use of the official and Magyar languages on territories with a mixed population. In the spring of 1994, pro-democratic and pro-western forces ousted Vladimír Mečiar from office, yet the six following months was too a short a time for catching up with the rest of reforming post-communist countries, particularly Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In the parliamentary elections in the fall of 1994, Vladimír Mečiar returned to power. Allied with the nationalists and the radical left, he imposed a harsh rule over the National Council, the opposition and the media. As a result of the mysterious abduction of the son of President Michal Kováč, who dared to defy the government and Mečiar himself, Slovakia began to lag behind in the European integration processes. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the opposition political parties supported, though indirectly, by non-governmental organizations and awakened Slovak society, defeated the government that torpedoed its own formally proclaimed integrationist goals. The two subsequent governments, led by Mikuláš Dzurinda, succeeded in transforming the country's negative international image and attracting foreign investments. Being politically stable, the country became a member of both NATO and the EU in 2004.

Difference: When attempts to reach an agreement with the Czechs on an authentic federation failed, Slovaks received, somehow unexpectedly, their own state in a way resembling March of 1939. The accusations against Mečiar as an authoritarian leader collided with divergent views on how national property should be privatized. After Mečiar's return to power in the fall of 1994, Slovakia continued in its efforts to join the European Union and NATO. It failed to become a member of the OECD due to the government's unwillingness to privatize strategic branches of the Slovak economy. Despite diplomatic and political warnings regarding the infamous causes of Michal Kováč, the denial of his parliamentary seat to František Gaulieder and the assassination of Robert Remiáš, who had information regarding the Kovac kidnapping, negotiations with the EU and NATO continued. The "change" in 1998 brought about an influx of former representatives of the non-governmental sector into the various ministries, while many of those who remained loyal to their original mission of being the watchdogs over a young democracy were disillusioned. The fragmentation of old political parties and the emergence of new ones in the late 1990s and the early 2000s were complemented by scandals stemming from corruption. In contrast with the third Mečiar government, where there were two camps clearly separated one from another, the situation in the first and second Dzurinda governments resembled wars of all against all. The only factor that kept the coalition together was fear of Mečiar. Slovak society, which was tired of the endless chain of political conflicts and scandals, with what was left of its enthusiasm and energy, helped to complete the country's integration into the EU.

As a part of the community of European nations, Slovaks have not only the right, but also the duty to expect that their ability to comply with the criteria for membership should be equaled by the ability of the Union to provide fair and indiscriminate treatment, free from paternalistic approaches. This will help the Slovaks to grow and appear as a modern and self-confident nation, visible and judged according to their efforts and accomplishments. Speculations on Slovakia's cultural and civilizational proximity with either the East or the West, which bothered so many domestic and foreign politicians and intellectuals in the mid-1990s, are secondary. Of primary importance is the ability of Slovak society to maintain and strengthen its internal integration and to continue to proceed in its mental trans-

formation. This requires the capacity and willingness of Slovak society to reproduce itself on the basis of its historical traditions, while embracing democratic values, as well as a pluralist and consensual system of governance and politics. At the same time, the membership of Slovakia and other Central Eastern European post-communist states in the European Union provides it with an opportunity to learn from the collapse of the former Communist Bloc by evolving into a community of truly equal members.

Slovakia's Postcommunist Transformation from an Historical Perspective

Scheme

Seeming	← As →	Being
↓		
Method: Deductive		Method: Inductive
Begins in the present		Begins in the past
↓		↓
Perspective:		Perspective:
Political Science		History and PSCI
↓		↓
Objective:		Objective:
Explaining the present		Understanding the present
by interpreting the		by interpreting the past by
		reconstructing the past
↓		↓
Depth of historical		Depth of historical
background: Medium		background: High
↓		↓
Retrograde horizon:		Retrograde horizon:
Medium		Distant yet connectable
		With the present
↓		↓
Connectivity present→past:		Connectivity past→present:
Retrospective		Chronological

↓
Causality:
Fragmented

Bricolage I

Brick A: Result

Delayed Slovak post-Communist transformation and integration with EU and NATO ↔ low ↔

↓
Brick B: Sub-condition

Breakup of Czechoslovakia
Reason: prevalence of archetypical Slovak nationalism over the solution of practical problems ↔ high ↔

↓
Brick C: Prerequisite 1
High degree of Slovak compliance with communist regime. Societal life completely Hibernated ↔ high ↔

↓
Brick D: Prerequisite 2
Weak economic base Inherited from Hungary; Legacy of wartime Slovak Republic as a totalitarian State ↔ medium ↔

↓
Brick E: Historical residua
Slovaks politically passive; Their extinction as a nation Imminent, if not saved By Czechs ↔ medium/high ↔

↓
Causality:
Complex

Bricolage II

Brick "Europe"

Slovakia's integration delayed but completed on institutional level, continues on societal level

↑
Brick "Division"

Split with the Czechs over disparities and competences, not national identity

↑
Brick "Communism"
Slovaks partly compliant with communist regime; Refuse interference in religious matters, form environmental movement

↑
Brick "Betrayals"
Wartime Slovak Republic created out of necessity, economically viable. Slovak autonomy rejected in postwar Czechoslovakia

↑
Brick "Antecedents"
Slovaks resilient and socially active in A-H; opt for Czechoslovakia instead of Hungary

VLADIMÍR MEČIAR AND THE POLITICS OF PRIVATIZATION IN SLOVAKIA, 1992-1998¹

John A. Gould

"A just privatization does not exist; we all know that the only criterion was loyalty."

— Viťazoslav Móric, SNS honorary chair²

Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution put former Communist Party bureaucrats and industrial managers on the defensive. Associated with the communist past, many top managers were removed from their jobs while the middle managers that replaced them carried little political clout in broader debates over the design of economic reforms like privatization. As a result, Czechoslovak privatization architects had the freedom to offer average citizens a potential stake in state-owned companies. In return for a small administrative fee, citizens received coupons that would allow them to bid on company shares. Most participating citizens, however, chose to invest through new financial intermediaries, called investment privatization funds, which would concentrate citizens' small shares into larger stakes in privatized companies. By 1993, these intermediaries began to rival remaining communist-era managers for control of Czech and Slovak firms.³

¹This paper is adopted from John A. Gould, *The Politics of Privatization: Wealth and Power in Postcommunist Europe* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011), 103-32. A full list of acknowledgments can be found on pp. vii-viii of that work, but the author would like to thank the following for their comments, assistance and support: Hilary Appel, Kevin Deegan-Krause, Sharon Fisher, Zsolt Gál, Simona Gould, Timothy Haughton, Ľubomíra Hromková, Darina Malová, Mikael Olsson, Marek Rybař, Soňa Szomolányi, James Thompson and Milada Anna Vachudová. The author is responsible for any errors in logic or fact.

²Abigail Innes, *Czechoslovakia: The Short Goodbye* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 263.

³Ed Clark and Anna Soulsby, "The Re-formation of the Managerial Elite in the Czech Republic," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48:2 (1996), 285-303; Mitchell Orenstein, *Out of the Red: Building Capitalism and Democracy in Postcommunist Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Hilary Appel, *A New Capitalist Order:*

While the mass privatization program continued in the Czech Republic through 1995, Slovakia's industrial managers were able to derail it after independence on January 1, 1993. They had initially suffered from the same liabilities as their Czech counterparts.⁴ Yet, as debate over the sovereign status of Slovakia developed in 1991-92, Slovak managers found a resource in identity politics that their Czech counterparts largely lacked.⁵ By fusing their interests to rising popular-nationalism, a select group gained influence with a number of Slovakia's nascent political parties, and most notably, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

The following paper examines the politics of privatization in Slovakia after independence. Slovakia's battle over privatization and its aftermath was a nasty, occasionally dangerous affair with very high stakes. At the center of this battle, initially, were the efforts of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and various industrialists to stop the highly popular citizens' "voucher" privatization program that Slovakia had inherited from the federal republic. This had little to do with the voucher program's evident flaws. Rather, Mečiar's policies sought to reorient privatization away from the new financial intermediaries which largely supported his opponents. In its place, his government operated a direct sales program that would benefit those who would support him.

Yet, by attempting to replace a program that rewarded a majority of Slovak citizens with a program that only rewarded a narrow group of industrial managers and political allies, Mečiar embarked on a democratically difficult project. His early efforts to gain close personal control over the privatization process contributed to the alienation of many of the key players in the HZDS, including President of Slovakia Michal Kováč. The president briefly orchestrated Mečiar's

Privatization and Ideology in Russia and Central Europe (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004); Peter Rutland, "Thatcherism, Czech-Style: Transition to Capitalism in the Czech Republic," *Telos* 94 (1992), 103-130; Gould, *The Politics of Privatization*, 56-68.

⁴Interview with Jozef Uhrík, Commercial Director, Volkswagen Slovakia, Devínska Nová Ves, Slovakia, January 14, 1997; Interview with Štefan Marsina, Special Assistant to the General Director, *Považské strojárne*, a.s., Považská Bystrica, Slovakia, July, 22 1998.

⁵Hilary Appel and John Gould, "Identity Politics and Economic Reform: Examining Industry-State Relations in the Czech and Slovak Republics," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52:1 (2000), 111-31.

removal from power in March of 1994 after he made a speech criticizing a series of legally questionable privatization decisions. When Mečiar regained power in November, he acted on the knowledge that his political and economic ambitions were incompatible with the democratic institutions he had inherited. The ensuing assault on democratic norms, rules and procedures, while not entirely directed at privatization, nevertheless gave his ruling coalition the freedom to privatize as it pleased. However, by the end of Mečiar's third term, Slovakia could no longer demonstrate its democratic credentials to the European Union or NATO. Both threatened to exclude Slovakia from their next rounds of expansion.

Privileged access to government was not simply important to acquiring property. Under Mečiar it also became increasingly useful for securing favorable economic policies such as the allocation of credit, the regulation of capital markets, government procurement, and taxation policies. Between 1996 and 1998, such largess undermined Slovakia's economic recovery and threw the country into an economic crisis. By 1998, both Slovakia's long term economic recovery and its European future were in danger. Slovak voters responded with an 84.4 percent electoral turnout that left the ruling coalition no choice but to accept the vote and surrender power.

Privatization should produce independent economic actors who seek a profit rather than a government handout. Yet, as the Slovak experience under Mečiar reminds us, privatization is first and foremost a means of acquiring wealth and power. Where easy profits can easily be had through political connections, creating private property does not necessarily go hand in hand with market democracy. For privatization to be most effective, societies must first be willing and able to police the intersection of state policy and economic activity.

Voucher Privatization in Slovakia, 1992-1993.

Privatization in Czechoslovakia was designed at the federal level, but it was largely carried out by the Czech and Slovak republic-level governments. In Slovakia privatization began under the government of Prime Minister Ján Čarnogurský (Christian Democratic Movement-KDH) and his 30 year-old neo-liberal Minister of Privatiza-

tion,⁶ Ivan Mikloš. While there was room for administrative innovation to account for local differences, in practice, Mikloš administered the voucher program in an almost identical fashion to his Czech counterparts.

This was no small accomplishment. Following the collapse of support for Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar's first government in the spring 1991, the new ruling coalition was deeply divided over privatization. The Čarnogurský government included Ján Holčík, and Jozef Belzak as Ministers of Industry and Economy, respectively. While both men favored a transition towards markets, both had industrial ties and favored a strong sectoral industrial policy in which firms would be restructured *before* privatization. In addition to Čarnogurský's ministers, industry had a strong friend in KDH member Viliam Oberhauser, a founding member of what Mikloš claimed was industry's *nomenklatura*-controlled peak organization, the Federation of Employers Unions and Associations (AZZZ).⁷ Oberhauser was a key member of the nationalist wing of the KDH and had helped author a "gradualist" economic reform scenario, challenging the market-oriented federal economic reforms that had been in place since January of 1991.⁸

This created difficulties for Mikloš. In the final years of the 1980s, Mikloš had studied market economics at the Austrian school of Friedrich Hayek. At the time of the Revolution, he had been an economics student and lecturer at the Faculty of Economics in Bratislava. Deputy Prime Minister Jozef Kučerák brought him into the government in 1990.⁹ After, the launch of strong market-oriented

⁶There were three privatization ministries—one in each republic, and one at the federal level to deal with federal state property. Their formal name at the republic level was the Ministry for the Administration and Privatization of National Assets. For an explanation see, Petr Husák, *Budování kapitalismu v Čechách: Rozhovory s Tomášem Ježkem* (Prague: Volvox Globatour, 1997), 111; John A. Gould, *The Politics of Privatization*, 61.

⁷Ivan Mikloš "Economic Transition and the Emergence of Clientalist Structures in Slovakia," in Soňa Szomolányi and John Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation* (Bratislava: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Slovak Political Science Association, 1997), 65.

⁸Ivan Mikloš recalls that the Ministries of Forest and Water, Agriculture and even the Environment - all run by KDH appointees - had strong gradualist leanings. Interview with Ivan Mikloš, Consultant, M.E.S.A. 10, Bratislava, April 2, 1997.

⁹Mikloš's first post was as Deputy Prime Minister, Jozef Kučerák's advisor, and Director of the Government's Section for Economic and Social Policy. Interview

reforms in January of 1991, however, Slovakia's economy suffered disproportionately more than the Czech Republic's economy.¹⁰ Economic liberals like Kučerák increasingly became the target of colleagues seeking to distance themselves publicly from the growing pain of economic transformation. Market reforms would be managed better, they argued, if Slovak politicians were to have greater control over their own economic and political affairs where they could use state controls to moderate the pace of transition.¹¹ As the lead proponent of a federally brokered, rapid transformation towards a market economy, Kučerák was forced to step down after a vote of no-confidence in the spring of 1991.

Mikloš was elevated to Minister of Privatization soon after and quickly replaced Kučerák as the most outspoken market liberal in the government and the strongest public supporter of federal reforms. He faced the brunt of attacks from both the opposition and the national wing of the ruling KDH. This included surviving several parliamentary votes of no-confidence. By the winter of 1991-92, it was increasingly clear that the KDH-led coalition would fare poorly in the upcoming June elections. Mikloš feared that the next government would most likely slow privatization and delay the creation of private owners. He therefore sought to start the voucher program as quickly as possible—to create a *fait accompli* of new owners with a stake in continuing the rapid property transformation program.

Mikloš was responsible for convincing state-owned firms to put up shares for the voucher privatization program in Slovakia. He recalled that the threat of dismissal helped him to encourage most managers to include significant voucher components in their base privatization plans, but the pressure was bitterly resented.¹² Mikloš

with Ivan Mikloš, Bratislava, October 1, 1996; Interview with Jozef Kučerák, Bratislava, January 13, 1997.

¹⁰Slovakia was particularly handicapped by its reliance on heavy defense industries, among other things. See Gould, *Politics of Privatization*.

¹¹For details see Gould, *Politics of Privatization*, 73-79.

¹²In about sixty cases, managers called for direct sales exclusively to themselves. Assuming that the managers had failed to meet their obligations under the privatization act to make important data available to competitors, Mikloš reopened the proposed submission process for an additional two months and pushed the firms to provide the necessary data to allow competitors to propose rival privatization plans for each firm, Mikloš interview, October 1, 1996; Ivan Mikloš, "Corruption Risks in the Privatization Process: A Study of Privatization Developments in the Slovak Re-

further alienated industrial elites by converting what they hoped would be a program of cheap, direct sales of enterprise shares to incumbent managers, into a transparent, competitive program in which price was the leading criterion. Prior to the June elections, the ministry sold shares in 189 firms for prices approximating and often exceeding their book value.¹³ It would be another six years before the state would do as well financially in its direct sales of public property.

Meanwhile, the first wave of voucher privatization began in October of 1991 with the registration of 2.59 million Slovak citizens, almost two-thirds of the adult population, through the federal Ministry of Finance. As in the Czech Republic,¹⁴ registration for the program in Slovakia initially lagged until financial intermediaries (also referred to as investment privatization companies) began to offer a ten-fold or greater return on the voucher holder's initial registration fee within a year. Seventy-two percent of Slovak citizen-participants subsequently invested their voucher coupons with investment privatization funds in the first wave of privatization. Bidding on firms began in May of 1992 and closed in December. Shares were finally distributed to new owners in April of 1993.¹⁵ Despite the efforts of industrial elites, the federal voucher privatization program had succeeded in providing the investment privatization funds stakes of up to forty percent in privatized firms.¹⁶ Another wave of voucher privatization could allow fund owners to consolidate ownership of Slovakia's industrial assets. Over the next two years industrial managers, therefore, worked diligently through AZZZ to ensure a second wave of voucher privatization would not take place.¹⁷

public," Bratislava, Klub Windsor, 1995; Interview with Ľudovít Černák, Member of Parliament, Bratislava, April 2, 1997.

¹³Mikloš interview, April 2, 1997; Mikael Olsson, *Ownership, Reform and Corporate Governance: The Slovak Privatization Process in 1990-1996* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 1999), 119.

¹⁴For details, see Gould, *The Politics of Privatization*, Chapter 5.

¹⁵For more on the technical details of voucher privatization, see Gould, *The Politics of Privatization*, 63-8.

¹⁶Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 115-6, 219.

¹⁷AZZZ (Federation of Employers Unions and Associations), "5. výročie AZZZ SR, 1991-1996," *Spravodaj AZZZ Extra*. Bratislava, March, 1996; Rudolf Lachovič, "Vzt'ah kupónovej metódy privatizácie a kolektívneho investovania," Global Brokers, Bratislava, 1997, manuscript.

Mečiar's Second Government, 1992-1994.

Mečiar's HZDS dominated the June 1992 elections. With the tacit support of the Slovak National Party (SNS), he became Slovak Prime Minister for the second time. In July negotiations with Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus, Mečiar failed in his bid to form a weak confederation with the Czech Republic. Unable to reconcile Mečiar's concept of a weak confederation with Klaus' concept of a strong federation, the two agreed to replace the federal state with two sovereign, independent republics. After parliamentary approval in both republican assemblies, the countries split peacefully on January 1, 1993.¹⁸

As in the Czech Republic, voucher privatization in Slovakia became one of the more popular aspects of the federal reform program.¹⁹ This may help to explain why the Mečiar government, elected in June of 1992, completed the first wave as its predecessor had planned. Nevertheless, Mečiar's Minister of Privatization, Ľubomír Dolgoš, promised a shakeup in the next round. One of the new government's first decisions was to indefinitely postpone the demand that firms submit second round privatization plans to the Ministry of Privatization. This necessitated at least a delay in the second round of voucher privatization.

In September of 1992, the government program declaration and an associated Ministry of Privatization document spelled out a new privatization philosophy based on a more gradual state-guided economic transformation. Rather than emphasize the rapid creation of new owners, the state would now single out "strategic fields" where it would intervene to protect the national interest through the state restructuring of enterprises before, or in place of, privatization. Industrial ministries would design and coordinate restructuring plans with the assistance of the state-controlled financial sector.

¹⁸Eric Stein, *Czecho/Slovakia: Ethnic Conflict, Constitutional Fissure, Negotiated Breakup* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Innes, *Czechoslovakia*.

¹⁹Mikloš interview, April 2, 1997; Dušan Tříška recalled being surprised at the strong support for the voucher scheme in Slovakia. Dušan Tříška, "Privatization: Czechoslovakia" *Eastern European Economics* 26 (Fall, 1991); Dušan Tříška, "Political, Organizational, and Legislative Aspects of Mass Privatization—Czechoslovakia," in Marko Simonetti and Andreja Böhm, eds., *Privatization in Central & Eastern Europe, 1991*. (Ljubljana: Central and Eastern European Privatization Network, 1991). Oldřich Dědek, *The Break-up of Czechoslovakia* (Aldershot: Avebury 1996), 201.

This concept also favored direct sales to incumbent managers over voucher privatization. Price was no longer the dominant criterion in evaluating bids on the company shares that were to sold. First installments were lowered from thirty percent of the price to ten to fifteen percent, and payment could be extended over fifteen years. Another round of voucher privatization would take place, but would only be used as a residual method.²⁰

Similarly, the threat that a manager would be dismissed diminished under the new government. Mikloš asserted that Mečiar and his Minister of Economy, Ľudovít Černák, reappointed many of the communist-era managers that had been pushed out by Čarnogursky's government.²¹ Many of these had been forced out for having collaborated with the communist secret service before the Revolution—in a process called “lustration.”²² Černák himself related that Mečiar frequently paid little attention to his appointees' lustration certificates in his personnel decisions.²³

Little privatization occurred under Dolgoš in the first six months of 1993. Rather, Mečiar focused his energies on consolidating control over his cabinet—pushing out co-HZDS founder Milan Kňažko (who was a marginal threat to Mečiar for party control) and Minister of Economy, Černák. As a Kňažko protégé, Dolgoš soon found himself in constant conflict with Mečiar—most notably over whether vouchers should have any role in the second round when it started. Mečiar felt they should not, while Dolgoš asserted that he sought to put aside about a third of corporate shares for voucher privatization.

²⁰Dolgoš stressed that any efforts to set voucher privatization timelines or the volume of assets to be voucher privatized in advance, “would. . . fail to serve a purpose.” Dolgoš's reformulated concept even “warned” industrial managers that if their second wave base privatization plans relied *too heavily* on the voucher method, they would be “subjected to particularly critical and thorough evaluation.” There would also be a critical “assessment of the risks derived from concentration of ownership through privatization investment funds.” Instead, Dolgoš emphasized “combined methods” in which management buyouts would play an “exceedingly important role.” Ministry of Administration and Privatization, SR., “Concept of the Continuing Process of Privatization in the Slovak Republic.” Ministry of Administration and Privatization of National Property of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Republic, ministry document, 1992; Interview with Ľubomír Dolgoš, Faculty of Management, Economics University, Bratislava, March 20, 1997; Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 119-20.

²¹Mikloš interview, April 2, 1997.

²²Marsina interview, July, 22 1998; Uhrík interview, January 14, 1997.

²³Černák interview, April 2, 1997.

On June 12, 1993, Dolgoš lost an HZDS-engineered vote of no confidence and stepped down.²⁴

The departures of independent personalities like Černák, Kňažko and Dolgoš left Mečiar in more solid control over the HZDS and the government, but it also made his parliamentary majority vulnerable to future defections. Nevertheless, Mečiar stepped up his efforts to replace his former colleagues with his personal loyalists—particularly in the Ministry of Privatization and the Fund for National Property (FNM).²⁵ At that time, the privatization ministry coordinated the privatization decision-making process while the FNM was a fully state-owned joint stock company charged with distributing shares to their new private owners. FNM appointees also represented the state's interests as a shareholder at general assemblies of corporate shareholders. In 100% state-owned companies, the FNM was on paper, at least, in complete control of the firm. Control over the FNM would give the Prime Minister control over most unprivatized and many partially privatized firms.

Attempts to gain direct governmental control over the privatization ministry and the FNM brought Mečiar into sharp conflict with President Michael Kováč, another co-founder of the HZDS.²⁶ To replace Dolgoš at the privatization ministry, Mečiar chose a close associate, Ivan Lexa. Having backed Mečiar in the dismissal of Kňažko, Kováč now balked. Citing Lexa's inexperience and potential conflicts of interest with his father (a communist-era central planning agency bureaucrat, recently-turned entrepreneur), the president refused to approve the appointment. Mečiar responded by giving Lexa the post of State Secretary of the Ministry of Privatization (the highest ministerial position not requiring presidential approval) and assumed the responsibilities of Minister himself. One of Lexa's first privatization decisions as State Secretary in July of 1992 was to ap-

²⁴ Dolgoš interview, March 20, 1997; Černák interview, April 2, 1997.

²⁵ Kevin Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities: Democracy and Party Competition in Slovakia and the Czech Republic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 25.

²⁶ Slovakia's President was constitutionally weak, making the need for a strong party system to check the Prime Minister's power all the more necessary. Executive power flowed from the Parliament, with limited presidential powers to check it. Kováč could and did veto legislation and appointees, but Parliament could override this with a simple majority. Later, when Parliament deadlocked over a new presidential candidate, presidential powers – including the power of a presidential amnesty – transferred to the Prime Minister.

prove his father's participation in the privatization of Považské mlyny a cestovinárne, a.s., with a personal stake estimated at up to 1 billion Sk (then about US \$30 million).²⁷

While Mečiar consolidated power over Slovakia's privatization and property control mechanisms, financial intermediaries whose funds had done so well in the first round of privatization began to assert some clout in shareholder meetings. Enterprise managers had also established a few funds.²⁸ Slovakia's largest company, Východoslovenské železiarne, a.s (Eastern Slovak Steelworks—VSŽ) had established Cassiovia Invest, which had the marketing clout to acquire more than ten percent of the vouchers. But most funds—and hence a large portion of corporate power—were in the hands of enterprise outsiders, a fact that was increasingly resented by the incumbent industrial managers.²⁹ In the first wave of privatization, the funds had amassed a forty percent stake in privatized firms and from the perspective of incumbent managers, carried unwelcome clout. Battles soon emerged over which would be dominant in determining the overall strategy of the company, the shareholder-dominated Supervisory Boards or the management-controlled Boards of Directors.³⁰

Mečiar's allies came to feel that the most influential funds were, as subsequent Fund for National Property President Štefan Gavorník put it, "owned by the opposition."³¹ While not technically true, by the end of the year, industrial managers and fund-appointed board members began to run into sharp conflict over the day-to-day management and long-term strategy of "privatized" companies. Hoping to avoid a further erosion of corporate insider influence, AZZZ halted a

²⁷Anton Marcinčin, Daniela Zemanovičová, and Luboš Vagač, "Privatization Methods and Development of Slovakia," Bratislava, Center for Economic Development, 1996, 17.

²⁸Another fifty percent was spread across a wide range of funds and individual shareholders, leaving the FNM, with its residual 37.6 percent, effectively in charge. Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 223.

²⁹AZZZ, "5.Výročie AZZZ SR, 1991-1996"; Mikloš, "Corruption Risks," 64; Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 279, 283.

³⁰Slovak and Czech companies had a dual board structure consisting of a supervisory board that gave general strategic direction to the company and managerial oversight, and a management board—largely consisting of top corporate managers—that oversaw the day-to-day operations of the firm.

³¹Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 118.

second round of voucher privatization. Mečiar obligingly pushed back the start date for the next round of voucher privatization.

In the fall of 1993, Mečiar complimented his firm grasp of the Ministry of Privatization by putting personal loyalists on the board of the National Property Fund. Between December of 1993 and March of 1994, his indirect control over state shares of major firms allowed him to replace enterprise board members and managers of twenty-one Slovak companies which, allegedly, failed to show sufficient loyalty to the HZDS. Mečiar claimed that he was simply replacing opposition-linked managers from the VPN-KDH era with more independent managers. Indeed, he accused parliamentary opposition leaders "straight into the eye, in front of everyone, that each one of them is linked with one of the twenty-one major Slovak corporations in which we intervened. And this is the problem."³²

Mečiar was possibly correct in his assessment. While in power, KDH ministers appointed people to the boards of leading Slovak state firms and other opposition leaders clearly had close industrial connections. However, it was unclear whether they were now being removed because they were acting as KDH clients or due to their reluctance to serve HZDS interests. Indeed, the KDH-era manager of the large oil refinery, Slovnaft, was allegedly replaced after he refused Minister of the Economy Ján Ducký's demands that he subcontract services to HZDS-linked firms.³³

By the winter of 1994, Mečiar's increasingly personal consolidation of party and governmental power had alienated many of his own party members. By February of 1994, a last remaining block of HZDS deputies, led by HZDS co-founder Jozef Moravčík, appeared ready to follow other former HZDS members and allies into opposition. The threat of losing power may have led to a subsequent wave of direct sales. Starting with the "midnight privatizations" of February 1, 2004, Lexa sold forty-four companies with a book value of \$96 million for a final sale price of just \$22 million. The decisions were notable for their lack of transparency, conflicts of interest, and advantageous terms to the purchasers—many of whom had close ties to leading government officials. Thirteen were subsequently annulled

³²Specifically, Mečiar was accusing Vojtech Bugár, Ján Čarnogurský, Ľudovít Černák and Peter Wiess. "Accuses Opposition of Links with 21 Major Companies," *TASR-Slovakia* (February 6, 1994).

³³Confidential interview, Slovnaft insider, Bratislava, February, 1997.

by the successor government for contravening the Large Scale Privatization Act of February 1991, but virtually all of the privatizations were suspect. The beneficiaries included a range of politically connected individuals—from the wife of the leader of the Slovak National Party (SNS) to Mečiar's own Minister of Finance, Július Tóth.³⁴

A March 11, 1994 report of a commission investigating the privatizations triggered the departure of the dissident-HZDS faction led by Jozef Moravčík and a parliamentary vote of no-confidence in the government. In his speech before parliament, HZDS co-founder and Slovak President Michael Kováč openly accused Mečiar of a lack of transparency and clientalism in the privatization process, among other things.³⁵

Mečiar's and Lexa's hurried attempts to reorient Slovakia's privatization framework to favor political and economic insiders had run afoul of the opposition's effective use of liberal democratic institutions and norms. When next he gained power, Mečiar's new parliamentary majority would attack these opposition resources directly.

VSŽ and the Slovak Way of Privatization.

One of Mečiar's last acts in the 1992-1994 government helps illustrate both the zero-sum nature of privatization, as well as its growing politicization. In December of 1993, the state exercised its shareholder rights to remove President Zoltán Berghauer and other top managers from the executive management of the state-owned firm VSŽ, Slovakia's largest commercial entity. Berghauer had co-founded the AZZZ and was the lead author of an industry anti-reform petition in early 1991.³⁶ Mečiar claimed that the top management change was a technocratic decision—made through consulta-

³⁴ Marciničín et al. "Privatization Methods"; Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 121.

³⁵ Marciničín et al. "Privatization Methods"; Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*, 25.

³⁶ In February of 1991, only a month after the start of market reforms, the Slovak and Czech industrial federations delivered a joint petition to the Federal Assembly demanding "help in solving the difficult economic and financial situation of industrial companies... [resulting from] the ill-considered restrictive fiscal, credit and monetary policy of the Federal Government." Reforms, the industrialists continued, threatened, "the collapse of the entire national economy" and a "declining living standard for all citizens of the state." Zoltan Bergauer et al., "Petice svaz u průmyslu ČR a SR Federálnimu shromáždění ČSFR," *Hospodářské noviny*, February 29, 1991, p. 3.

tions with high-ranking bank and industrial managers.³⁷ Yet he did not hide the fact that the change was to reduce the "unwarranted influence" of "opposition parties" in Slovakia's largest enterprise.³⁸

Berghauer and other purged VSŽ managers protested the move, citing a history of political manipulation and threats by the HZDS towards VSŽ management. The source of the claim directly attacked Mečiar's Minister of Finance, JúliusTóth. Tóth had been VSŽ's Vice President of Finance until he had resigned to join Mečiar's government. According to Berghauer, Tóth allegedly become enraged when Berghauer and VSŽ's management refused to accept an HZDS member on the VSŽ Board of Directors. Tóth allegedly responded by demanding that the two top VSŽ officials resign due to their political support for the KDH and other political opponents of the HZDS.³⁹

Tóth later asserted that the Berghauer team had been stripping assets from the company. Through control of both the VSŽ and collaboration with an independent trading company, they allegedly could siphon cash from the VSŽ to the trade company by overcharging for supplies and underpaying for products.⁴⁰ Perhaps to cut these alleged sales out of the revenue loop, or maybe to cut his allies in, Tóth's new management team set up a new VSŽ-owned sales company to oversee sales responsible for eighty percent of VSŽ revenues.⁴¹

As Minister of Finance, Tóth and Lexa orchestrated the purchase of a 9.52 percent share of VSŽ stock through a new private company, Manager a.s., established by five VSŽ board members, including prominent HZDS member Alexander Režes. The purchase was ques-

³⁷"Strong in the Saddle," *TASR-Slovakia*, February 11, 1994.

³⁸"Mečiar Accuses Opposition of Links with 21 Major Companies," *TASR-Slovakia*, February 6, 1994.

³⁹"Former Members of VSŽ Board Lodge Complaint," *ČTK Business News*, March 21, 1994.

⁴⁰Despite Tóth's allegations against Berghauer, no charges were ever filed.

⁴¹Anthony Robinson, "Survey of Slovakia," *The Financial Times*, December 16, 1994, p. iv. It is unlikely that Tóth was genuinely outraged at the allegations of corruption at VSŽ. In 1993 he had allegedly used his influence as Minister of Finance to give a trading company, VSŽ Selecta, a state contract to sell sugar that the Indian government provided to the Slovak government in place of its cash debt. VSŽ Selecta won the contract without the required tender and then sold the sugar on the world market in violation of its contract. Tóth was a member of the company's board. "Report on 'Sugar Affair' to be out in January," *ČTK News*, December 5, 1993.

tionable for its unsightly conflicts of interest, advantageous terms and most of all, its timing. Again, in accordance with the government program, the shares were sold to domestic entrepreneurs at a substantial discount with a generous payment schedule. The discount on the current share value of the package was \$36 million.⁴² After a ten percent down payment, Manager would pay the rest in yearly installments over five years.

Manager's members each made their down payment with an interest-free \$62,000 loan from the Košice-based Priemyselná banka (Industrial Bank) whose controlling shareholder was, in turn, the VSŽ-controlled fund, Cassiovia Invest.⁴³ Priemyselná banka, moreover, received these funds from Banka Slovakia (Bank Slovakia), which then served as the repository and investment arm of the FNM. In short, *Manager* borrowed FNM funds to buy shares from the FNM that in turn benefited close associates of its directors and the man responsible for their appointment, Vladimír Mečiar.⁴⁴

The timing was also controversial. The Mečiar government received the proposal to privatize the VSŽ shares to Manager on March 7 and the government approved the request on March 11—the day on which parliament finally passed a vote no-confidence in the Mečiar cabinet. The FNM and Manager signed the agreement on March 14, the day the government fell. On March 17, VSŽ held a general assembly at which the now former Minister of Finance and FNM Board member, Július Tóth, was elected Chair of VSŽ's Board of Directors. Režes would become Minister of Transportation in

⁴²Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 22.

⁴³Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 223, note 39.

⁴⁴“Approach to VSŽ Privatization ‘Strange and Unusual,’” *ČTK Business News*, May 3, 1994. Mečiar attempted to establish Banka Slovakia as early as 1993 in his home region of Banská Bystrica as part of his effort to develop a regional banking center. The goal was to use the bank to recycle FNM funds and provide cheap credit for small to medium sized enterprises. After the VSŽ deal, however, the opposition charged that it would be used as a means of providing the politically connected with cheap capital to make down payments for privatization deals. In April of 1994, the next government suspended the bank's license to operate. With Mečiar's re-election in the fall, the government pushed the National Bank of Slovakia to grant the license. But, after building a costly and elaborate headquarters in Banská Bystrica and suffering from notoriously poor lending practices, the bank had significant difficulties with capitalization. The NBS finally approved a license to begin operating on June 1, 1996, but the bank—like most Slovak banks—quickly developed a problem with non-performing loans.

Mečiar's next cabinet. Supporting the vote were VSŽ's investment privatization fund, Cassiovia Invest and *VÚB Invest*, the investment company of Všeobecná úverová banka (General Credit Bank-VÚB) and Slovakia's largest state owned bank. Ironically, oversight responsibility for VÚB had, until four days earlier, lain primarily with Tóth's Ministry of Finance.⁴⁵

Mečiar's Opposition Takes Power, March-November, 1993.

A five-party caretaker government under the leadership of HZDS defector Jozef Moravčík was formed in mid-March. It promised to restore transparency and accountability to the privatization process and to re-launch the voucher privatization process as soon as possible. This was to be done before the scheduled new elections at the end of September. The coalition fought, however, over how to restore confidence, transparency and speed to the privatization process.

Nevertheless, Kevin Deegan-Krause demonstrated how the new coalition allowed itself to be held accountable to competitive political forces.⁴⁶ The recent experience with Mečiar may have taught the government coalition partners a good lesson in the dangers of over-concentration of power—particularly in the areas of property management and privatization. Yet, the new five-party coalition was fractious and ideologically incoherent. This influenced privatization. On the one hand, the formerly communist Party of the Democratic Left (SDE) sought to maintain direct sales as the primary method of privatization. On the other hand, the coalition partners accused it of intending to use direct sales to reward its *own* allies amongst Slovakia's ex-communist industrialists and bureaucrats.

The Ministry of Privatization, however, was now led by Milan Janičina, a lawyer from the center-right Democratic Union (DU). He sought to ensure that any direct sales would be a rule-governed, multi-party competitive process, not something to be run exclusively by SDE dictates.⁴⁷ The SDE did, however, secure an agreement to sub-

⁴⁵“Approach to VSŽ Privatization ‘Strange and Unusual,’” *ČTK Business News*, May 3, 1994. Tóth also became deputy chairman of *Priemyselná banka*, Olsson *Ownership, Reform*, 223, note 39.

⁴⁶Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*, 26.

⁴⁷Interviews with Milan Janičina, Commercial Lawyer, Bratislava, March 10, 1997; April 1, 1997.

ordinate the importance of price in the sales to employment and future investment commitments.⁴⁸

Corruption may have been possible in the final sales, but the number of competing interests in the decision making process ensured that the foxes guarding the hen house would keep each other in line.⁴⁹ Still, the program was not unimpeachable. Most of the direct privatization sales of fifty-four Slovak enterprises occurred *after* the elections had delivered a strong plurality to the HZDS but before Mečiar had formed a government.⁵⁰ The government also conducted a public tender for the government's 24.9 percent share in *VSŽ*, attracting interest from nine companies, including the Austrian bank Creditanstalt. The coalition lost power before it could resolve internal bickering over the final buyer.⁵¹

Throughout the summer of 1994, citizens, center-right coalition parties, brokerage firms and investment privatization funds clamored for a second wave of voucher privatization. Janičina fought with SDL's Minister of the Economy Peter Magvaši (also an AZZZ member) to ensure that there would be enough property offered to make the project worthwhile. In preparation, the Ministry of Finance issued voucher booklets to seventy-two percent of Slovak citizens (ninety percent of those eligible). This was a significantly higher participation rate than the first wave. Janičina secured assets valued at \$1.96 billion for the voucher program—making each voucher booklet potentially worth \$593.00. After another aggressive campaign from financial intermediaries, fifty-eight percent of voucher holders traded their points for shares in investment privatization funds.⁵² If the second wave of voucher privatization was completed, managerial insiders would cede significant additional economic power to the funds.⁵³

⁴⁸Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 124.

⁴⁹Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Beyond Clientelism: Incumbent State Capture and State Formation," *Comparative Political Studies* 41:4/5 (2008), 638-73.

⁵⁰Interview with Rudolf Filkus, Member of Parliament, Bratislava, April 15, 1997; Janičina interviews, March 10, 1997; April 1, 1997.

⁵¹Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 222.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 124-5.

⁵³Janičina interview, April 1, 1997.

Privatization under Mečiar's Third Government, 1994-1998.

The Moravčík government was short-lived. The SDL had secured early elections and in the ensuing campaign the center-right fragmented amongst a range of competing personalities. A number of opposition parties failed to cross the five percent threshold in the September-October 1994 vote. Moravčík's Democratic Union (DU) received 8.6 percent, the KDH won 10.1 percent, SDL got 10.4 percent and the ethnic Hungarian Coalition took 10.2 percent of the votes.

The HZDS, meanwhile, won a thirty-five percent plurality. This was less than in 1992. However, since thirteen percent of the electorate voted for parties that did not pass the five percent threshold, the ideological weight of the next parliament shifted sharply back towards Mečiar and his national-populism. After a month of negotiations, the HZDS formed an ideologically awkward coalition with the two smallest delegations in parliament—the extreme right Slovak National Party (SNS-5.4 percent) led by the garrulous Ján Slota,⁵⁴ and the extreme left Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS-7.34 percent).⁵⁵ To discipline his junior coalition partners, Mečiar could use the threat of an alternative coalition with the reformed communist party, the SDL.⁵⁶ Critics speculated that the “brown-red” wings of the new ruling coalition were held together only by the promise of privatization benefits.⁵⁷

The National-Populist Privatization Concept and its Implementation.

Mečiar's privatization policies formally settled the long-standing ideological battle between market reformers and gradualists over privatization policy, but in reality, this conflict had stood proxy for an underlying clash of interests between enterprise outsiders and incumbent firm management. Gradualist concepts were hijacked, to an extent, and combined with clientalism and xenophobic nationa-

⁵⁴In the spring of 1993, Mečiar had helped Ján Slota oust Černák from control over the SNS. Černák left (with Janičina) to form the Democratic Union. Černák interview, April 2, 1997.

⁵⁵Grigorij Mesežnikov, “The Open Ended Formation of Slovakia's Party System,” in Soňa Szomolányi and John Gould, eds. *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 50.

⁵⁶Innes, *Czechoslovakia*, 262.

⁵⁷Mikloš, “Economic Transition,” 64.

lism to benefit the governing coalition and its allies at, as we shall see, a growing cost to the public.

The formal theory underlying the Mečiar government's privatization program echoed the Dolgoš strategy of the fall of 1992. The government would work closely with incumbent industrial managers to achieve ownership patterns that would be most appropriate to a coordinated industrial policy. The state would integrate equity transfer, credit and other policies in ways that would boost the strength of Slovak national firms on world markets and minimize transformational pain at the enterprise level. The variety of capitalism officially envisioned was thus much closer to a continental-style state-coordinated market economy than a more hands-off liberal market economy. However, Slovak industrial leaders at AZZZ also invoked Asian development models to explain what they were trying to accomplish.⁵⁸

Insiders Ascendant.

In practice, Mečiar's coalition privatized the privatization process. It also subordinated capital markets regulation to the needs of incumbent managers at the expense of enterprise outsiders. The main target was the funds that emerged through voucher privatization.⁵⁹ Mečiar's new parliamentary majority began to work even before he formed a government. In an overnight session of parliament on November 3-4, 1994, his new coalition passed legislation that secured exclusive control and oversight of privatization, the state media and the secret service.⁶⁰ An amendment to the 1991 Large Scale Privati-

⁵⁸Interview with František Bruckmeyer, General Director, Federation of Employers' Unions and Associations (AZZZ), Bratislava, February 6, 1997. Prior to becoming Director of AZZZ, Bruckmeyer worked for the Czechoslovak federal government after the Warsaw Pact invasion (1970-1974) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Moscow (1974-1980). In the 1980s, he directed the state-owned firm, Zdroj, before co-founding AZZZ in 1991. Compiled from "Leaders.sk" database. Trend Holding Co. and *The Slovak Spectator*, Bratislava. <http://www.leaders.sk/-index.php?id=674> [accessed August 30, 2010].

⁵⁹Marčinčin et al., "Privatization Methods"; Mikloš, "Economic Transition,"; Ivan Mikloš, "Privatizácia," in Martin Bútorá and Michal Ivantyšin, eds. *Slovensko, 1997: Súhrn a správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1998*. (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1998).

⁶⁰Soňa Szomolányi, "Identifying Slovakia's Emerging Regime," in Soňa Szomolányi and John Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 10.

zation Act transferred the right to propose and decide direct sales from the privatization ministry to the relatively less transparent FNM (Act #369/1994). The majority then stacked the FNM's Presidium and Supervisory Board with coalition officials and cancelled Janičina's 54 direct post-election sales (Act #370/1994). In five cases, new property owners had already taken legal possession of their assets from the state.⁶¹ This violated both international human rights law and the Slovak Constitution.⁶²

The transfer of power to the FNM had important implications. The Constitutional Court later ruled that, as a joint stock company, the FNM did not have to submit to government review or regulatory oversight. Hence, it was exempt from oversight by the supreme government control body that could oversee and audit state agencies. Even had it not been exempt from oversight, however, the November 3-4 "night of the long knives" removed opposition parliamentarians from the oversight committee. The ruling majority was now fully responsible for monitoring itself.⁶³

While extolling the virtues of a state-directed transformation, Mečiar provided the new measures with a market reform cover story. He claimed that insulating the privatization process from opposition would allow the FNM to make decisions according to technocratic criteria, free from political influence. In 1998, when the damage had been done, this allowed him to claim that although he still agreed with his "concept" of privatization, he had not been responsible for its administration.⁶⁴

Mečiar's "concept" ultimately excluded outsiders from privatization. He initially promised that the second wave of voucher privatization would go ahead as planned—although with less property than Janičina envisioned. In July of 1995, however, Parliament cancelled voucher privatization altogether (Act #190/1995). Voucher booklets

⁶¹Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 126.

⁶²Both Article 17b of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly 217/1948) and Protocol 1, Article 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 1952) secure the right to possessions.

⁶³Deegan-Krause, *Electing Affinities*, 29. In the fall of 1997, Parliament finally gave into EU and opposition pressure and appointed Ivan Mikloš to the supervisory board of the FNM.

⁶⁴*ČTK News*, May 8, 1998. Mečiar was never directly implicated in a privatization scandal while in power, Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist*, (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 91.

could now be exchanged for a bond with a face value of 10,000 Sk to be redeemable in 2001 or on the bearer's 65th birthday and with an interest rate equal to the discount rate of the National Bank of Slovakia (NBS). Proceeds to meet the bond obligations were to come from sales of state property—a promise that the FNM's new privatization policy of selling to domestic industrial managers at a deep discount made impossible to keep. In its public statements, AZZZ took full credit for the cancellation of vouchers.⁶⁵

A Constitutional Court decision overturned parts of Act #190 in late 1996.⁶⁶ By that time, however, the FNM had already privatized most of Slovakia's remaining “non-strategic” industrial enterprises. Even had the government wanted to re-launch the voucher program, it would now have had to renationalize private properties to find adequate assets to make the program work.

An additional measure passed in July of 1995 enhanced the government's capabilities to coordinate a state-directed industrial policy through the Strategic Enterprises Act (# 175/1995). The purpose of the act was to preserve the “public interest” in crucial Slovak industries. First, twenty-nine firms would be exempt from privatization altogether. This included the fundamental sectors of the economy including telecommunications, energy and the defense-related engineering sector. The list of strategic companies, made public in the summer of 1996, also included some at least questionably “strategic” firms such as health spas.⁶⁷ All told, the Strategic Enterprises Act reduced the book value of assets remaining to be privatized by half.⁶⁸

A second, legally controversial provision of the act, forced an additional forty-five firms to transfer a “golden share” to the firm's founding ministry—in most cases, to Ján Ducký's Ministry of the Economy. The Constitutional Court overturned this prescription in April of 1996 as a clear violation of property rights, but tellingly, the owners of major pro-HZDS firms, like Slovnaft, had failed to give

⁶⁵Lachovič, “Vzt'ah kupónovej metódy privatizácie”.

⁶⁶Katarina Zavacká, “The Development of Constitutionalism in Slovakia,” in Soňa Szomolányi and John Gould, eds. *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 164.

⁶⁷The administration may have legitimately feared that privatization would mean the services of the spas would no longer be readily available or affordable to average Slovaks through the health care system.

⁶⁸Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 130.

the state ownership rights over the golden share. Their reaction gave credence to the market reformers' expectations that privatization—even via a highly politicized process—would produce *independent* agents with the potential, at least, to resist government policies that hurt their material interests.⁶⁹

In November of 1996, the Constitutional Court also annulled Parliament's transfer of privatization powers to the FNM (Act #370/1994). The court argued that the act had illegally abrogated the state's responsibility for the transformation of state property. The Court stopped short of retroactively annulling the FNM's actions, however. Stripped of its exclusive prerogative over direct sales, the HZDS-controlled FNM continued to serve its clients through public auctions of shares from the FNM portfolio. While share auctions are a relatively uncontroversial privatization mode, critics allege that the FNM often limited access about the time and location of the auction to all but the intended buyer.⁷⁰

Coalition Control over Direct Sales.

Between January of 1994 and November of 1996, the FNM privatized at a furious pace. While Act #370/1994 removed privatization from the government's portfolio of responsibilities, coalition officials and industrial insiders from AZZZ retained close control over the process. Two FNM officials, HZDS member and FNM Chairman Milan Reháč, and Co-Chair and Director of the Direct Sales Section, Ján Povrazník, were responsible for executing Presidium decisions. These were closely controlled by the ruling coalition. Junior coalition partner ZRS had formal responsibility for the privatization process. ZRS member Peter Bisák ran the Ministry of Privatization while ZRS vice-chairman Štefan Gavorník chaired the Presidium. Gavorník attested, however, that his influence was minimal: while the HZDS had no seats on the nine member Presidium, AZZZ members held six seats and hence a majority of the votes—and they supported the HZDS.⁷¹ Understandably, now that AZZZ

⁶⁹John A. Gould and Soňa Szomolányi, "Bridging Slovakia's Elite Chasm," *Transitions*, November, 1997.

⁷⁰Interview with Gabriel Palacka, Member of Parliament, Bratislava, April 18, 1997; Mikloš, "Economic Transition," 67-8.

⁷¹Tim Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities of Leadership in Postcommunist Europe* (London: Ashgate, 2005), 64.

influence was secured, incumbent managers who had previously been skeptical about privatization became its strong advocates.⁷²

According to Sharon Fisher, regional committees of five coalition representatives determined properties to be sold and top coalition officials made final decisions at coalition meetings every Wednesday at 6:00pm.⁷³ Allegedly, the meetings rarely considered the business merits of the proposal—or even how the sale would further the official goal of coordinated industrial restructuring. As Gavorník recalled, “We were.... lobbying for those who were coming to us.” Yet, Gavorník added, “not even a nail was sold without Mečiar.”⁷⁴ Milan Cagala, a HZDS-appointed FNM presidium member, confirmed these allegations.⁷⁵

More broadly, members of the ruling coalition were open about clientalism.⁷⁶ As Minister of the Economy, Ján Ducký (HZDS) explained, “every government gives advantages to those groups that cooperate with them. This is not controversial.”⁷⁷ Yet sales went beyond clientalism to open self-dealing—included sales to leading ruling coalition politicians and their family members. As Gavorník admitted, “Of course there are [politicians in the privatization process], and I know about them, but I won't tell. After all ... every citizen has a right to take part in privatization.”⁷⁸

Participants in the FNM's direct sales program typically received terms similar to the midnight privatizations of February 1994. Buyers—usually incumbent managers—would receive the company for

⁷²Ibid., 35.

⁷³Fisher, *Political Change*, 88-9. The regional meetings were an institutional mechanism for regionally based privatization groups to make their claims to property. In the eyes of observers, the groups became associated with leading HZDS officials and clients. For example, it was rumored that meetings in Košice tended to be dominated by Rezeš, those in Banská Bystrica by Mečiar, and those in Trnava by Vladimír Poor. Interview with Valér Ostrovsky, CEO, Schultz and Ostrovsky, Bratislava, May 14, 1997.

⁷⁴Marek Vagovič, “Gavorník: Za privatizáciou Nafta Gbely stál Gašparovič,” *Sme*, May 9, 2009, p. 3.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Mikloš, “Economic Transition,” 66-7.

⁷⁷Author's notes from “Slovak Spectator Live, Debates for Democracy Series: Brigita Schmögnerová & Ján Ducký,” Bratislava, 1996. An FNM spokesman shared this sentiment with the author. Interview with Oto Balogh, Press Spokesman, Fund for National Property, Bratislava, April 22, 1998.

⁷⁸Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*, 277-8, note 26.

as little as one third, one-fifth, or even less of its book value. In practice, the typical firm required a ten to fifteen percent down payment, often using money borrowed from a state-owned financial institution. Moreover, installments on the purchaser's debt to the FNM were usually spread over ten years and deductible from the company's tax bill.

These terms and often the buyers themselves were also frequently kept secret. In the case of the illegal sale of the *strategically listed* and highly profitable oil extraction and storage company, Nafta Gbely a.s., the new owners of the company remained a matter of intense speculation among opposition politicians and the press. The official address of the purchasing company, Druhá obchodná, a.s. was initially an abandoned building. Vladimír Poor, Trnava's HZDS chief and a member of the regional coalition privatization committee later admitted to being a primary beneficiary of the deal, along with a close Mečiar aide.⁷⁹ FNM President Gavorník later alleged that Poor was able to meet the company's 575 million Sk purchase price simply by raiding the company's 1,075 million Sk capital account. If Gavorník is right, Poor used the firm's bank account to buy the firm for himself. Prosecutors later unsuccessfully charged Poor with "tunneling" 300 million Sk out of the company, but dropped the charges. In the end, the circumstances of the company's privatization were never fully investigated, perhaps because Poor voluntarily returned the company to the state.⁸⁰

In another controversial case, the FNM sold a controlling stake of Slovnaft, Slovakia's oil refinery, to Slovintegra—a company owned by Slovnaft's director, Slavomír Hatina and nineteen other managers. Hatina was a financial backer of the HZDS and bought thirty-nine percent of the company at an eighty percent discount over the currently traded price. The initial down payment, moreover, was only 1.56 percent of the sale value. The FNM soon reduced the sale price by an additional eighty-four percent to reward management for meeting its promised investment and employment targets.⁸¹

The privatization of Slovakia's largest company, VSŽ, also continued apace under Mečiar's direct sales framework. In 1995, junior

⁷⁹Fisher, *Political Change*, 93-4; Marcinčin et al., "Privatization Methods."

⁸⁰Marek Vagovič, "Gavorník: Za privatizáciou Nafta Gbely stál Gašparovič, *Sme*, May 9, 2009, p. 3.

⁸¹Marcinčin et. al., "Privatization Methods," 18.

coalition member ZRS engineered a sale of ten percent of VSŽ shares to Hutník, a company formally owned by VSŽ's union members but strongly under the influence of Minister of Transport (until 1996), Alexander Režes. Again the price was a fraction of the real value of the shares and payments were made on a generous installment plan. Hutník then collaborated with Režes to form Ferrimex, a company that purchased another 15.4 percent on extraordinarily generous terms.⁸² The deal cemented Režes's control over VSŽ. Režes responded by essentially barring minority shareholder VUB kupón (an investment company set up by Slovakia's state-run savings bank) from receiving any information about the health and activities of the firm.⁸³

Nationalism in Privatization.

The Mečiar government employed popular economic nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric to justify its choice of a privatization program. Junior coalition partner SNS campaigned in 1994 on a promise to protect Slovakia from "impoverishment" at the hands of foreign investors.⁸⁴ The subsequent 1995 government program declaration promised to privilege "domestic business subjects" over foreigners in the privatization process. National entrepreneurs would then deal with their assets as they saw fit in what Mečiar correctly predicted would be a "third wave" of privatization to foreigners.⁸⁵

In practice, Slovak government officials remained deeply suspicious of foreign direct investment and often sought to block foreign partnerships. "We just want to avoid them coming in and closing [the company]," remarked one FNM official in an interview with the author. "Investors only come to misuse companies and disappear."⁸⁶

One example is notable for its senselessness: a foreign advisor to the government related that he worked with an entrepreneur to acquire a strategic foreign partner to modernize and expand production of his product line for export abroad. While the entrepreneur was not explicitly prohibited from signing the deal, he received several telephone calls from top officials in one ministry warning that he would

⁸²Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 223-5.

⁸³Ibid., 182.

⁸⁴Fisher, *Political Change*, 89.

⁸⁵Mikloš, "Economic Transition," 65.

⁸⁶Balogh interview, April 22, 1997.

be held fully accountable if even one Slovak lost his job as a result of the investment. He lost his nerve and cancelled the contract. The enterprise thus remained in debt and was unable to raise the money on its own for modernization; nor was it able to make its own marketing contacts abroad. The advisor noted that this was typical of the Mečiar government's attitude towards foreign joint-ventures.⁸⁷

The combination of national capitalism and knee-jerk nationalism cost Slovakia dearly. Joint ventures with multinational corporations were at that time leading the deep industrial restructuring of Central Europe. They had the capital, marketing networks and technology to outperform domestically privatized companies and they were far outperforming firms that remained in state hands, measured in both production increases and productivity growth.⁸⁸ Despite this growing record of success, the ruling coalition sold a mere five companies to foreigners out of a total 347.⁸⁹ On a per capita basis, by 1998, Slovakia had received half the FDI of Poland, one-third the FDI of the Czech Republic and only a tenth of the FDI of Hungary.⁹⁰ This was a lost opportunity. Over the next few years, new owners would effortlessly enrich themselves by “flipping” their cheaply acquired companies to international capital—realizing for themselves gains that should have gone into the FNM accounts to meet its new privatization bond obligations.⁹¹

Insider-Controlled Capital Markets Regulation.

Having gained control over the privatization process, incumbent managers pressured the government for a favorable capital markets policy. Throughout 1994 and into 1995, investment privatization companies had clashed with incumbent managers in company board rooms. As Michael Olsson relates, the managers wanted the new ow-

⁸⁷Confidential interview with a foreign financial service executive, Bratislava, October 20, 1996. Most of the foreign financial service executives and consultants I spoke with had similar stories.

⁸⁸John A. Gould and Soňa Szomolányi, “Elite Fragmentation, Industry and the Prospects for Democracy in Slovakia: Insights from New Elite Theory” in Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation* (New York: Columbia International Affairs Online, 1997), <http://www.ciaonet.org/book/gould/> [accessed February 23, 2012].

⁸⁹Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 133.

⁹⁰Gould and Szomolányi, “Elite Fragmentation,” 58.

⁹¹Fisher, *Political Change*, 94.

ners to contribute capital while they continued to control the direction of the company. The new owners of the funds, by contrast, sought to pressure the incumbent managers into improving cost efficiency, technological and organizational restructuring, and developing new—often international—marketing arrangements. It did not help that the funds with diverse portfolios did not have sufficient expertise to cover all the firms in their portfolio. Fund representatives were often barely out of university and entirely lacking in experience. A cultural clash thus developed between the older generation of industrial managers—most of whom had their start in Slovak industry in the 1960s and 70s—and the “young men from Bratislava.”⁹²

Government actions in 1995 wrested industrial control from the funds back to the industrial managers. Incumbent managers began to use the direct sales process to turn the tables at meetings of general shareholders. Olsson writes, “[M]anagers who acquired a large chunk of shares on soft terms from the FNM all of a sudden lost all respect for other minority shareholders....funds could only sit by [as]...managers or other domestic industrial groups took over.”⁹³

The government also intervened in capital markets to further tilt the balance of power towards management. Legislation in 1995 reduced the maximum stake investment privatization companies could hold in a company from twenty to ten percent. It also prohibited investment privatization companies from placing officials on a company's Board of Directors. This weakened the ability of fund-dominated Supervisory Boards to monitor the day-to-day actions of company managers. Parliament also passed capital markets regulation in 1996 that reduced the transparency of capital markets transactions and all but eliminated minority shareholder rights. President Kováč returned the legislation, demanding better protection for minority shareholders.

Ironically, the funds were not necessarily in favor of a better regulated market. The Slovak capital market had few of the institutional safeguards to protect minority shareholder rights and prevent insider trading that we find in more developed equity markets. Controlling owners were often able to expropriate value from minority

⁹²Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 182.

⁹³Ibid.

shareholders without penalty. This meant, ironically, that the emergence of a dominant shareholder in a firm often would lead to a *decline* in the value of the firms' shares.⁹⁴ The result was a loss in equity market liquidity: when one lost control over a company, one would often be unable to sell one's shares at any price. Wise investors knew that the majority shareholders could tunnel the real value of the company elsewhere.

Under such conditions, a passive portfolio stake in all but a few "blue chip" companies made little sense. Funds found they could best make money by secretly acquiring a controlling share of companies in unregistered, off market trades of physical paper shares and then selling them at a profit to a strategic investor. Given that a more transparent market would actually undermine this strategy, a number of funds were somewhat ambivalent about reforms that might make passive portfolio investment safer and profitable.⁹⁵

The ruling coalition made things even worse. It sought to limit the funds to a portfolio role even as it actively undermined their minority shareholder rights. Ministry of Finance capital markets regulator Jozef Magula testified on behalf of minority shareholder rights in front of Parliament—much to the disappointment of top AZZZ managers. A better law was passed in 1997.⁹⁶ Still, the new law continued to allow controlling shares to be bought anonymously in secret off-market trades.⁹⁷ Remarkd one broker philosophically, "at least we have rules."⁹⁸

⁹⁴Economist Joseph Stiglitz observed this phenomenon in the Czech equity market, but the problems were quite similar in Slovakia. Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Comments on 'Czech Republic: Capital Market Review Report,'" Delivered at the Ministry of Finance, Prague, Czech Republic, May 9, 1997; For details, see Gould, *The Politics of Privatization*, 81-101.

⁹⁵Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 184-5.

⁹⁶Magula claims that, as a result of his parliamentary testimony, he came under AZZZ pressure to step down. He relented and moved to the central bank. Interview with Jozef Magula, Member of the Bank Board, General Relations Department, National Bank of Slovakia, Bratislava, July 28, 1998.

⁹⁷Magula interview, July 28, 1998; Interview with Rudolf Lachovič, President, Association of Investment Managers and Investment Funds of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, June 16, 1997; for the early market regulatory climate, see Juris, 1994.

⁹⁸Ostrovsky interview, May 14, 1997.

Meaningful portfolio investment disappeared under Mečiar.

In addition, led by Magula, the government destroyed a rapidly growing mutual fund industry in 1996. Unlike the privatization funds, the new mutual funds gathered people's savings and invested them in the market and other assets. The pioneer was Prvá slovenská investičná skupina, a.s (First Slovak Investment Company-PSIS) an open-ended fund into which citizens could deposit and withdraw like a checking account. By early 1995, the PSIS's Sporofund had over \$50 million in savings.⁹⁹ It was allegedly well-run and had done a reasonable job at building shareholder value within its portfolio. But in the fall of 1994, the PSIS used its savings to invest in citizen voucher booklets issued under the Moravčík government. Vouchers, the PSIS controversially argued, were a form of state security and hence a legal investment for the mutual fund. Over 750,000 Slovaks signed up for the PSIS voucher privatization funds. Had the second wave of voucher privatization gone forward as planned, PSIS would have become the second wave's largest owner of shares in Slovak enterprises.

However, PSIS owners were also strong contributors to the Democratic Union—the party of Janičina and Moravčík. Moreover, the PSIS had a stake in the independent daily newspaper *SME*. Both PSIS's political orientation and its potential economic power were a threat to the ruling coalition and its industrial allies.

In the spring of 1995, the Ministry of Finance revoked PSIS's operating license. Courts found the measure illegal and ordered that the Ministry restore the license, but the Ministry simply revoked it again and transferred control of the company's Sporofund portfolio to Harvard Investment Company. In the face of a rapid withdrawal from the Sporofund, Harvard liquidated the fund and paid off savers about half of what they had put in.¹⁰⁰

The Coalition Assault on Democracy, 1995-1998.

Mečiar's coalition could not have achieved such close control over the privatization framework without a significant attack on democratic political and civic institutions. Hence, while Slovakia's

⁹⁹Interview with Vladimír Hoffman, Broker, Delta Securities, Prague, Czech Republic, July 25, 1997.

¹⁰⁰Magula interview, July 28, 1998; Ostrovsky interview, May 14, 1997; Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 187-90.

democratic decline from 1994 to 1998 was not exclusively caused by privatization, it was certainly linked to it. Indeed, it is unlikely that the ruling coalition and its allies would have fought so hard had the nation's most lucrative assets not been available for appropriation.

After *ad hoc* encroachments on democratic norms in 1993-94, between late 1994 and 1998, Mečiar's parliamentary majority reduced Slovakia's formal democracy to an illiberal shell verging on soft authoritarianism. One permissive cause was the majoritarian nature of the Slovak Constitution. Led by a strong executive and unhindered by a weak presidency already on the defensive, the Mečiar majority sought to override the remaining checks posed by the Constitutional Court, the political opposition, civil society and regional and municipal governments. This enabled a reorientation of the privatization framework towards political and economic insiders, but it also endangered "horizontal accountability"—the country's internal balance of institutional power.¹⁰¹

Mečiar's squabble with the president was the most visible aspect of this encroachment. Kováč's 1993 veto over Mečiar's choice of Ivan Lexa to run the privatization ministry marked the beginning of a running battle between the government and the president. The conflict took on added intensity during Mečiar's third government. Kováč did not have much institutional power to start with. His repeated vetoes of parliamentary acts were quickly overridden by a simple majority—entirely in line with the Constitution.

Yet, Mečiar sought to further weaken and discredit the president. An important player in this campaign was the Slovak Information Service (SIS), Slovakia's secret service. First, Mečiar had to gain control over it. In the November 3-4, 1994 session of parliament, Mečiar's majority excluded opposition parties from participating on the SIS oversight committee. In the spring of 1995, parliament transferred power to appoint the head of Slovakia's intelligence agency from President Kováč to Prime Minister Mečiar. Mečiar then appointed his trusted protégé, Ivan Lexa, to head the service.¹⁰²

Over the next two and a half years, Lexa waged a war of "dirty tricks" against the president and harassed civil society and indepen-

¹⁰¹Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, 5:1 (1994), 55-69; Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*.

¹⁰²Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*, 29.

dent entrepreneurs. The war reached its climax in August of 1995 when someone—possibly Mečiar, but more probably Lexa—ordered that the president's son be kidnapped, drugged, and dumped in neighboring Austria. When Róbert Remiáš, the confidant of an ex-SIS agent, implicated Lexa's SIS in discussions with the editor of the leading independent daily *SME*, Remiáš was assassinated. Mečiar's government squashed the investigation into the assassination—replacing three investigators before finding one who suspended the inquiry into the SIS link. The new investigator concealed evidence that 150-200 grams of Semtex had ignited the car's propane tank. Now on the defensive, the SIS launched a campaign to show that Kováč Jr. had arranged for his *own* kidnapping.¹⁰³

The battle between Mečiar and Kováč ended only after the president's term of office expired in 1997. As the government and opposition could not achieve the super majority needed to select a replacement under a clearly flawed constitutional provision, presidential powers fell to the Prime Minister. Mečiar subsequently used his presidential powers to pardon anyone linked to the kidnapping and Remiáš's murder—despite the lack of any official finding that a crime had taken place.¹⁰⁴

The government also encroached on the rights and prerogatives of the opposition, the courts, civil society and the media. In addition to oversight of the secret service, the November 3-4, 1994 parliamentary session blocked opposition MPs from participation on all substantive committees except the environment committee. The coalition further revealed its hegemonic intentions by trying to have former Prime Minister Moravčík's party, the Democratic Union (DU), banned from parliament and by charging President Kováč with treason. Both efforts failed.

To safeguard against a repeat of the 1993-4 defections of Kováč, Moravčík, Filkus, Kňažko and others, defectors from the HZDS were now treated with open disrespect for the constitution. After HZDS co-founder František Gaulider left the HZDS parliamentary club in 1996, the HZDS leadership produced a pre-signed letter of resignation that they had obtained in 1994 to ensure party discipline. The

¹⁰³Kieran Williams, "Slovakia Since 1993," in Kieran Williams and Dennis Deletant, eds., *Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2001), 130-140.

¹⁰⁴Deegan-Krause, *Elected Affinities*, 48-50.

parliamentary majority then stripped him of his parliamentary mandate, barred him from the building and replaced him in parliament with a HZDS loyalist. The Constitutional Court ruled these acts to be unconstitutional, but parliament did not reinstate him—another violation of Slovakia's fragile system of checks and balances. Gaulider also received numerous threats to his life.¹⁰⁵

Media and civil society also came under intense legal and extra-legal pressure from the government and allegedly the SIS. The HZDS attempted to monopolize channels for societal interest group representation by creating bureaucratic barriers to their legal operation and by establishing party-controlled interest groups that competed with independent societal interest groups in their particular field.¹⁰⁶

Similarly in the media, parliament's November 1994 legislation excluded the opposition from any role in oversight over public broadcasting. The state-controlled mass media and sympathetic newspapers then justified the government's actions with a torrent of unbalanced coverage, nationalism, xenophobia, personal slurs and misdirection.¹⁰⁷ Things were also tough for the independent media. Following his reporting on the Kováč, Jr. case, the editor of *SME* found a dead cat nailed to his door and his car burned. An anonymous leafleting campaign accused two other critical journalists of pornography and pedophilia. A third journalist who looked too closely at the links between Alexander Režes and the HZDS was beaten up in a Košice restaurant.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, privatization beneficiaries frequently bought and attempted to control the editorial content of the independent media. When VSŽ took over the business daily

¹⁰⁵Mesežnikov, "The Open Ended Formation," 43; Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, "Preface," in Soňa Szomolányi and John Gould, eds. *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 5.

¹⁰⁶Darina Malová, "The Development of Interest Representation in Slovakia after 1989: From 'Transmission Belts' to 'Party-State Corporatism?'" in Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 93-113.

¹⁰⁷The Helsinki Civic Assembly and the Association for the Support for Local Democracy survey concluded that state-run Slovak Television violated the principles of fairness more often than any other public or private media outlet during the 1998 electoral campaign. It devoted seventy-five percent of its news programs to Mečiar and the HZDS, *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2:192 (October 5, 1998), Part II.

¹⁰⁸Innes, *Czechoslovakia*, 313, note 139.

Národná obroda, for example, the new owners fired the newspaper's independent-minded editor. Overall, while the independent media functioned effectively, it faced numerous forms of petty harassment from various government agencies.¹⁰⁹

Independent news sources, however, did not reach the entire population. In much of the country, the state broadcast media was the primary source of information. After the November 3-4 session of parliament, government loyalists controlled the state media and state broadcasting reflected their views, even to the point of collaborating with the SIS to fabricate "investigative reports" slandering the president. Nor did the most important independent media source—the television station *Markíza*—initially have the coverage capacity or willingness to acquaint Slovaks with the details of privatization or other rule of law issues. Toward the end of the 1996-1998 period, however, *TV Markíza* did become a crucial source of alternative information in Slovakia.¹¹⁰

As the Mečiar government came into conflict with basic liberal institutions and freedoms, the EU, NATO, European governments and the United States all registered their displeasure. The EU, in particular, issued a series of diplomatic *démarches* as part of its dialogue with applicant countries.¹¹¹ In 1996, Freedom House reduced Slovakia's political rights ranking from "free" to "partially free."¹¹² However, the nastiest rap to the government's knuckles came in July of 1997, after the government illegally cancelled a national referendum on NATO membership. The European Commission recommended that Slovakia be excluded from the first wave of EU membership negotiations. While Slovakia was a liberal democracy in

¹⁰⁹ Andrej Školkay, "The Role of the Mass Media in the Post-Communist Transition of Slovakia" in Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 187-208.

¹¹⁰ Školkay, "The Role of the Mass Media," 196.

¹¹¹ Alexander Duleba, "Democratic Consolidation and the Conflict over Slovakia's International Alignment," in Soňa Szomolányi and John A. Gould, eds., *Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, 209-30; Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration after Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹² Freedom House, "Freedom in the World, 2007," Freedom House, Washington, D.C., 2007.

form, the Commission opined, it operated differently in practice.¹¹³ NATO followed suit and excluded Slovakia from its first round of expansion.¹¹⁴

The Mečiar government dismissed these external critics by questioning the objectivity of their processes and critiquing the patriotism of domestic opponents who agreed with them. Yet, the blows hurt. Slovakia's young, urban and educated citizens were deeply concerned with proving the country's western credentials and desperately wished to join Europe's most exclusive clubs. Thus, the EU and to a lesser extent NATO, increasingly put the government in a bind: Mečiar could not comply with their "conditions" and still retain his increasingly politicized and often illegal control over political and economic life. As Milada Vachudova pointed out, "political power depended on strategies that were incompatible with the EU's requirements of liberal democracy and comprehensive market reform."¹¹⁵

With the September/October 1998 parliamentary elections approaching, the HZDS even appeared ready to jettison free and fair elections. Parliament amended the electoral law in ways that gave the Ministry of the Interior greater influence in counting the vote; and it put ambiguous and potentially expandable limitations on the ability of the private media to cover the election. New electoral rules also shackled the ability of small parties or coalitions to participate in the election. Finally, the HZDS had the courts review the leading opposition coalition's eligibility to participate. Many worried that should the government apply a literal interpretation of its new laws, it could eliminate a number of important institutions of liberal democracy, including the right to contestation and participation as well as the right to alternative sources of information. Opponents feared a full-fledged authoritarian turn.¹¹⁶

Privatization's Half-way Reform.

Mečiar's privatization program produced stakeholders in dysfun-

¹¹³ European Commission, *Agenda 2000-Commission Opinion on Slovakia's Application for Membership of the European Union*, (Brussels: European Union, 1997), section 1. 3.

¹¹⁴ Duleba, "Democratic Consolidation."

¹¹⁵ Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*, 38.

¹¹⁶ J.M. Viersma, "Správa docasnej pozorovateľskej misie na Slovensku," *Euro Report*, no.15, 1998, pp. 22-23.

ctional economic policies. This was not necessarily pre-ordained. The first two Slovak governments retained the basic elements of the market reform program inherited from the federal government. An independent National Bank of Slovakia kept the Slovak currency strong, while the first two post-independence governments restricted their fiscal expenditures and preserved a liberalized trade environment. By 1995-6, Slovakia's firms were beginning to find new markets in Western Europe. Unemployment, still high at thirteen percent, was beginning to inch down. With so much slack in the labor market, inflationary pressures remained acceptable—reflecting a sustainable increase in demand as tradable products integrated into world markets.

The major problem was the deliberate coalition policy of politicized reform. 1997-8 turned out to be challenging years in the global economy. Yet, the network of industry-state-party ties shaped by an insider privatization process and illiberal politics made Slovakia even more vulnerable to a downturn.¹¹⁷ Missed tax payments, uncompetitive government procurement programs, significant new government financial obligations, delayed enterprise restructuring, low foreign direct investment and a troubled banking sector all contributed to an economic crisis that would cost Slovakia the next three years of growth.

Manipulation of Debt.

The Slovak Republic shows that a government's capacity to protect investor property rights and enforce debt contracts is crucial to the efficiency of privatization.¹¹⁸ The Mečiar government's policy of direct sales led to a rapid concentration of ownership, but it did not always produce more efficient behavior. According to interviews with Western financial services experts and equity market actors, Slovak owners often rejected enterprise restructuring and instead used their insider access to cash flows and assets from privatized

¹¹⁷ OECD, (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), *OECD Economic Surveys, 1998-1999: Slovakia*, (Paris: OECD, 1999), 29-30.

¹¹⁸ Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*; Simon Johnson and Andrei Shleifer, "Privatization and Corporate Governance," in Takatoshi Ito and Anne O. Krueger, eds, *Governance, Regulation, and Privatization in the Asia-Pacific Region*. NBER East Asia Seminar on Economics, 12 (2001), 13-34. <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c10182.pdf> [accessed February 23, 2012].

enterprises to get rich quickly—a process known as “rent seeking.”

Much of the reason relates to debt and the firms' low purchase prices. Slovak firms carried a large outstanding burden of debt which they were not necessarily pressured to honor. First, Slovakia's bankruptcy law privileged debtors over creditors, reinforcing a persistent problem with overdue liabilities.¹¹⁹ Second, the administration of the first wave of voucher privatization in Slovakia led to an initial concentration of privatized property in the state-bank owned funds. These state-owned banks often transgressed the official firewall between their lending and equity management operations and forced firms to take on more loans than they needed.¹²⁰ The percentage of non-performing loans in the portfolios of Slovakia's three state banks skyrocketed between 1996 and 1998 from twenty-five to thirty-seven percent.¹²¹

Third, privatization in highly discounted client or management buyouts failed to bring in new cash or debt relief to Slovak companies. Despite the often-symbolic purchase prices and favorable repayment terms, politically connected buyers would often increase debt by borrowing from state banks to make their down payment to the FNM. Privatized firms also frequently stopped paying their taxes. Between 1995 and 1998, tax arrears of private firms in Slovakia tripled to about sixteen percent of total state expenditures. Fully paid, this would have been enough to eliminate the budget deficit.¹²²

The scarcity of cash in the economy did not bode well for restructuring. Many managers privatized their firms only to find themselves apparently condemned to eke out a living at the margins of solvency for years on end. Facing such choices, and given lucrative

¹¹⁹OECD, *Economic Surveys, 1998-1999*, p. 97.

¹²⁰Debt loading is the practice of pushing unnecessary loans on cash rich firms at high rates as a means of extracting their funds. According to Andrew Schwartz, it was a common practice among bank-owned privatization funds in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Since debt loading siphoned off cash that should have been shared with the enterprise ownership's minority shareholders, it was a form of tunneling. Andrew Schwartz, *The Politics of Greed: How Privatization Structured Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 236-7; Appel, *A New Capitalist Order*, 64; Jarko Fidrmuc and Andreas Wörgötter, “Czech Banking Sector: Reasons of Banking Crises and Prospects,” Discussion Paper, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, Austria, 1998.

¹²¹OECD, *Economic Surveys, 1998-1999*, 79.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 54-55.

opportunities for cash assets elsewhere,¹²³ it actually made sense for new owners to strip their companies and return the shells to the FNM before making the first installment payment. Another option was to consume the company slowly—meeting its minimal obligations to the FNM and tax office, defaulting on inter-enterprise debt and siphoning off the extra cash.¹²⁴ Officially, the FNM was allowed to control major asset transfers in firms with FNM debt, but in practice, it was too over-stretched to monitor all transactions.¹²⁵

Mečiar's HZDS—through the government—held the ends of the long strings of debt that permeated the economy. Ideally, given its commitment to state-led industrial restructuring, these debt obligations should have been used by the government and the Ministries of Finance and Economy to coordinate restructuring efforts. Indeed, the Ministry of the Economy's official statement on industrial policy made it clear that control over liability networks was a crucial component of its effort to engage in industrial restructuring. The Ministry also aspired to promote the development of asset networks, "by supporting groupings of enterprises into holdings," to "pool investment resources."¹²⁶

The reality was that, due to coalition permeation by privileged

¹²³In one example of crowding out, the author interviewed an industrial manager who had recently signed a contract to produce copper pipes for a firm in Germany. When it came time to buy scrap metal to begin production, however, the cash he had reserved for the purpose had disappeared and he had to default on the contract. He soon learned that the owners had moved the funds to a short-term security with a return far greater than that offered by the copper pipe contract. Interview with Štefan Marsina, Special Assistant to the General Director, Považské strojárne, a.s., Považská Bystrica, July, 22 1998.

¹²⁴Indeed, one EU sponsored consultant that I spoke with actually advised his clients to engage in a similar "triage" strategy of debt management. He advised managers facing illiquidity to delay paying those creditors who were no longer essential to the firm while using scarce cash to meet obligations to those creditors who were. The understanding was that the legal framework would favor the debtor. Confidential interview, foreign financial consultant, Bratislava, April, 1997.

¹²⁵Balogh interview, April 22, 1997. Ironically, the politicization of credit and debt may have meant that the incentives to "rip off" stakeholders and minority shareholders were greater for owners who did not enjoy close contacts with the government. Unlike their well-connected competitors, they were less likely to win any dispensations from government creditors at the state-owned banks, the FNM or the tax officials.

¹²⁶Ministry of the Economy, SR, "Slovakia's Industrial Policy Update." Ministry of the Economy, Slovak Republic, ministry document, 1997.

industrial interests, it was the governing coalition's industrial clients (as well as those firms that could "arrange" for ad hoc dispensations) that often pulled the strings of Slovak industrial and privatization policy. The result was that state-business networks were used to channel present and future tax revenues into the pockets of politically important industries and individuals. Ironically, after the Mečiar government fell in 1998, the successor government picked up these long strings and used them to regain control of many enterprises.

Revitalization and Industrial Policy.

Even inter-enterprise debt and tax arrears provided opportunities for government manipulation. As noted, the bankruptcy framework privileged debtors over creditors. As most AZZZ members were debtors, there was little incentive for the industrial lobby to support a change in policy. Yet the government also passed a controversial Revitalization Act that granted chosen firms the right to enter into a state-sponsored debt relief program.¹²⁷ The Revitalization Act was designed in conjunction with Ducký's Ministry of the Economy on behalf of Slovakia's hard-hit engineering and machinery sectors. Based largely on tax relief, in practice its use was limited to the "restructured" companies owned by the quasi-private holding company, DMD Holdings a.s., as well as a number of agricultural firms.¹²⁸

DMD, run by Mečiar's former Minister of Finance JúliusTóth, was an umbrella holding company for a network of former state-run defense manufacturing firms that were most severely hit by defense cutbacks at the end of the Cold War. In addition to restructuring, DMD profited from direct Ministry of Economy support—mostly in the form of encouragement and coordination—for the development of an indigenous automobile supply network.¹²⁹ While the effects of these direct attempts at industrial policy appeared to be generally well intentioned, they had little positive effect on restructuring the

¹²⁷Ministry of the Economy, "Slovakia's Industrial Policy Update," 18.

¹²⁸The government also set up a state-run arms trading company, Armex. OECD, *Economic Surveys, 1998-1999*, 104-5.

¹²⁹AZZZ 1996; Interview with Ministry of Economy Plenipotentiary for the Automotive Industry in Slovakia, Alfred Richter in Samuel Bibza, "Veľké Plány," *MOT*, August, 1998, 4-8. Interview with Ján Lešinský, President, Slovak Society of Automotive Engineers, Bratislava, August 10, 1998.

companies involved.¹³⁰ Indeed, the program virtually halted marginally successful earlier attempts at defense conversion.¹³¹ Slovakia eventually got its automotive sector, but it took the defeat of Mečiar, clear political compliance with the prerequisites of EU membership, macroeconomic stabilization and significant initial investment incentives to entice foreign automobile producers and supply companies to come to Slovakia.¹³²

Politicization of Bank Privatization.

The FNM's insider privatization framework raised levels of conflict surrounding bank privatization. In early 1996, Mečiar promised to privatize Slovakia's largest state banks to Slovakia's leading enterprises, most notably VSŽ and Slovnaft.¹³³ Observers quickly pointed out that the likely result of the privatizations would be to decapitalize the banks as owner-firms, like VSŽ, wrote themselves checks. Hence, while opposition parties KDH, DS and DU, were officially in favor of privatizing the banks, they formed a one-time coalition with HZDS's far left wing governing partner, ZRS, to get the banks placed on the list of strategic enterprises that *prevented* their privatization. The ZRS had nothing against bank privatization *per se*, but it allegedly was upset that the HZDS had excluded ZRS clients from buying one of the banks.¹³⁴ While partially preventing the banks' capture and potential mismanagement by industrial managers, the banks nevertheless remained undercapitalized.

Deeply in need of capital, the VSŽ nevertheless did secure control over Slovakia's third largest state bank, *Investičná a rozvojová banka* (Investment and Development Bank-IRB) through the support of the FNM at shareholder meetings.¹³⁵ IRB had a troubled portfolio

¹³⁰ OECD, *Economic Surveys, 1998-1999*, 104-5.

¹³¹ Mikloš, "Economic Transition," 75.

¹³² Sharon Fisher, John Gould and Tim Haughton, "Slovakia's Neoliberal Turn," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:6 (2007), 977-98.

¹³³ If we include the third state owned financial institution, Slovenská sporiteľňa, these three banks accounted for as much as 90% of all Slovak deposits and 60% of all loans. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), *Slovak Country Report, 1997-8*, (Paris: OECD, 1998), 29; EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit), *Slovak Country Report, 1st Quarter 1998*, (London: Economist, 1998), 17.

¹³⁴ Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 258.

¹³⁵ OECD, *Slovak Country Report, 1997-8*, p. 29; EIU, *Slovak Country Report, 1st Quarter 1998*, p. 17; Olsson, *Ownership, Reform*, 158.

which VSŽ control did little to correct. The state had been using it to keep a nuclear power plant solvent and to provide subsidies to the construction industry to build apartments for young couples.

In 1997, IRB liquidity problems worsened and the bank was forced to borrow internationally at rates driven up by the emerging global financial crisis. The National Bank of Slovakia (NBS) directed the VSŽ, as the primary owner, to provide a much-needed capital injection. The VSŽ refused. The NBS later "suggested" that the bank's deterioration resulted from "serious illegal transgressions which negatively influenced the bank's activities." To add to the crisis, junior coalition partner SNS refused to support a renewal of state support for the construction industry's subsidized apartment loan program. After more government infighting, the IRB failed to meet its depositors' demands, forcing the NBS to seize it in December of 1997.¹³⁶

The VSŽ raid on Slovakia's financial sector was the logical culmination of insider privatization under illiberal political conditions. Tightly bound together by political necessity, Mečiar's administration provided Rezeš and his network of enterprises insider access to special deals in privatization, taxation, credit allocation (from state financial institutions) and almost every other area where the state intersects with economic activity. Moreover, Mečiar did this despite open indications of nepotism, corruption and mismanagement. The final cost to other corporations, the taxpayers and VSŽ's more than 25,000 employees was enormous. By the winter of 1998, VSŽ Holdings had defaulted on its foreign obligations and was facing layoffs and bankruptcy. Mečiar's successor government then used this crisis to regain control of the company and limit its growing debt.¹³⁷ In 2000, the successor government sold the VSŽ to United States Steel Corporation.

¹³⁶OECD, *Slovak Country Report, 1997-8*, 77-8; EIU, *Slovak Country Report, 1st Quarter 1998*, 17. In the spring of 1998, the VSŽ used its influence with the FNM and its direct and indirect shareholdings in the two other state financial institutions to provide the IRB with a costly capital injection. The VSŽ again refused to contribute any cash of its own beyond the initial amount required by the NBS. Nor was there any real attempt by VSŽ to find an adequate foreign buyer. Peter Laca, "Troubled IRB bank approves capital injection," *The Slovak Spectator*, May 7-21, 1998.

¹³⁷"Vláda mimo hry," *Pravda*, November 17, 1998; See also Mikloš, 1997.

Abuse of State Property.

Coalition misuse of property included firms that were not yet privatized. Perhaps the most notable case is former Minister of the Economy Ján Ducky's abuse of the country's natural gas company, Slovenský plynárenský priemysel (Slovak Gas Industry-SPP). A key member of AZZZ and a former communist-era official, Ducky resigned his position with the government to oversee a systematic tunneling of SPP assets for personal and political use. This included financing FC Slovan—Slovakia's most famous football team (and, ironically, the former Czechoslovak rival to Sparta Praha, a team purchased by VSŽ's Alexander Rezeš). Ducky would even hand out cash bonuses to reward players for stellar play.¹³⁸ The full extent of Ducky's tunneling only became clear after the government fell from power. Ducky died in a still unexplained assassination in 1999 three days after a probe was launched into his handling of the company.¹³⁹

Slowing Macroeconomic Performance.

It is ironic that, except for privatization, Mečiar's second government largely left the federal reform package intact until 1996.¹⁴⁰ The resulting favorable entrepreneurial conditions and international demand produced a relatively strong recovery in 1994-1996, matching a regional trend. The tight monetary policy of the largely independent NBS was a crucial element in the strong macroeconomic performance of Slovakia. Yet, since NBS monetary discipline also significantly raised the cost of credit, maintained the real value of liabilities, and put constraints on fiscal policy, the NBS came under pressure from the Ministry of Finance to be "more cooperative" with Slovak industrial policy. According to Ivan Mikloš, VSŽ President Ján Smerek complained that the NBS's tight money policy was a form of "disliking VSŽ and, apparently, disliking Slovakia's development."¹⁴¹ Under intense industrial pressure, the NBS narrowly escaped an attempt by parliament to place it more directly under government control.¹⁴² Heavy borrowing, low foreign investment and this attack on the NBS led major investment rating agencies to

¹³⁸Confidential interview with FC Slovan football player, Bratislava, July 1998.

¹³⁹Fisher, *Political Change*, 94.

¹⁴⁰Mikloš, "Economic Transition," 63.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 71-2.

¹⁴²EIU, *Slovak Country Report*, 1st Quarter 1998, 16-7.

downgrade Slovak bonds to below investment-grade level in the spring of 1998. This further raised the cost of borrowing.¹⁴³

By the end of Mečiar's third government, enterprise restructuring in Slovakia had also slowed. Firms that sought an injection of capital had to face among other things: poorly functioning equity markets rendering an initial public offering nearly impossible; a government that was suspicious and even hostile to foreign strategic investors; government decision-making and procurement processes that frequently violated the equal application of the rule of law; and finally, an increasingly profligate fiscal policy, capped by a costly infrastructure development program that crowded out private investment.

By the spring of 1998, the Mečiar government had to finance its cash-starved economy on European markets at the relatively costly rate of 3.5 percent above the London Inter-Bank Offer Rate. It also borrowed short term domestically at a nominal rate of twenty-eight percent. The high level of domestic borrowing aggravated the credit squeeze on Slovakia's already strapped enterprises.¹⁴⁴ Short term borrowing to meet long term debt obligations was the final nail in the Mečiar government's economic coffin. By the summer of 1998 it was clear that the Slovak performance of the previous years had been financed by unsustainable fiscal spending and borrowing.

Mečiar's Electoral Defeat, October 1998.

Parliamentary elections in late September of 1998 proved a satisfactory *denouement* to the regime's VSŽ-led orgy of self-dealing. The government had put in place rules that looked as if it was equipping itself with the necessary tools for a full-fledged authoritarian seizure of power. No seizure occurred. It is possible that the HZDS did not even consider the possibility. Even if it had, concerted efforts from independent NGOs, regional governmental associations, and a united center-right coalition of parties and the SDE helped to mobilize 84.25 percent of the voting population. Many correctly interpreted the election as a test of Slovakia's Western European credentials. The HZDS won a marginal plurality, but the ZRS was in shambles

¹⁴³"Another Agency Downgrades Slovakia's Risk Indicator," *The Slovak Spectator*, May 7-21, 1998, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴M.E.S.A 10, *Slovak Monthly Report*, May 1998, p. 1-2; M.E.S.A 10, *Slovak Monthly Report*, July 1998, p. 2.

after its lamentable performance as a far left party in formal charge of creating capitalists from state assets. The HZDS tried, but was unable to lure the SDE away from the opposition to form a coalition. The SDE then joined a coalition of parties (the Slovak Democratic Coalition-SDK), SMK and the new Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) to form a government united by little more than opposition to Mečiar and a desire to get into the EU and NATO.¹⁴⁵

Slovakia's privatization winners split deeply during the election. Most of the direct beneficiaries of Mečiar's politicized economic policies remained close to the Prime Minister. Most notably, VSŽ owner Alexander Rezeš provided the HZDS with significant financial support and other perks, including flying the Prime Minister to campaign events in his private jet and even forcing his football team, Sparta Praha, to wear HZDS jerseys in a campaign-related friendly match. Rezeš's empire was already hemorrhaging money despite having raided two of Slovakia's leading financial institutions. The IRB had already been bailed out by the NBS at taxpayer expense. This was an indirect subsidy that allowed money to filter into the HZDS campaign. It must have been clear to Rezeš that only continued "industrial collaboration" with his political patron would save his fortune.

Yet, faced with the gathering strength of the opposition, other Mečiar clients were more circumspect—even Trnava's Vladimír Póor hinted at his willingness to work with a new government.¹⁴⁶ The SOP, the new "Party of Civic Understanding" promoted itself as the voice of the independent entrepreneurial community. In interviews, its spokesman strongly critiqued the disastrous economic management of the government and promised to uphold the rule of law in economic and political dealings. It sought initially to establish a safe, pro-business middle ground between the polarized camps in Slovakia's "Cold War." Despite this, its founder, Rudolf Schuster, refused any prospect of cooperation with the HZDS.¹⁴⁷ Other entre-

¹⁴⁵Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová, "Slovakia's Democratic Awakening," *Journal of Democracy*, 10:1 (1999), 80-95.

¹⁴⁶John A. Gould and Soňa Szomolányi, "Slovakia: Elite Disunity and Convergence," in John Higley and Gyorgy Lengyel, eds., *Elites after State Socialism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 47-70.

¹⁴⁷Interview with Ferdinand Petrák, Vice Chairman, Party for Civic Understanding (SOP), Bratislava, July 28, 1998; Haughton, *Constraints and Opportunities*, 71.

preneurs continued to support the SDL, and the newly united Slovak Christian and Democratic Union (SKDU).¹⁴⁸

Conclusion.

Having privatized their enterprises through political connections, Mečiar's clients went on to privatize state policy. Rather than demand the rule of law, they corrupted politicians; rather than invest resources to restructure, they stripped and tunneled them; rather than act as national champions, they preyed on the country's financial stability. By 1998, the coalition government's economic model was no longer sustainable. As the economic price of clientalism grew, the politicization of economic policy became an important additional grievance in the opposition's political arsenal. Never completely united, many of the coalition's economic allies sat on the fence or sought accommodation with the opposition. Others proved firm HZDS supporters—particularly Rezeš's VSŽ, who must have seen that VSŽ's financial future was closely linked to government policy.

On the whole, privatization in Slovakia did not produce "market democrats," but it did succeed in providing economic agents who responded to their own logic of action. These proved to be both a boon and a curse to Mečiar during his moment of greatest political crisis. Privatization's impact on Slovakia's political liberalization, in short, was at best neutral and at worst negative. Ultimately, it was a united opposition, strategically smart NGO's and a mass mobilization of Slovakia's voters that established market democracy in Slovakia.

¹⁴⁸Gould and Szomolányi, "Slovakia: Elite Disunity and Convergence."

HUNGARIAN MINORITY POLITICS IN SLOVAKIA: UNDER FICO, AFTER EU ACCESSION

Carol Skalník Leff

Many scholars of European integration have shown keen interest in the behavior of new members after the pressures of “conditionality” have been lifted, and the political and policy constraints of qualifying for membership have abated. The 2006 election in Slovakia, won by Robert Fico’s SMER, was the first contested after Slovakia’s EU accession, and offers a useful case study of one of the EU’s desiderata—the treatment of ethnic minorities. In this article, I analyze the Fico era’s impact on the minority rights agenda by focusing on two points. The first is the Fico government’s record in the sphere of minority politics and policy. The second, and in some respects potentially more consequential, is the way the Slovak party system’s identity politics dimension was reconfigured during his term of office. I contextualize this analysis by noting the Fico government’s positioning in the evolution of the “two-level game” on minority rights issues played out under successive Slovak governments with the European Union. During the pre-accession period, external pressures to conform to European concerns seemed less important for Slovak responsiveness than the composition of the government in power. The post-accession period analyzed here seems to follow the same pattern, with the Fico government relatively resistant to external initiatives and the successor Radičová government more aligned with EU norms and expectations.

The Context:

2006 witnessed the first Slovak elections following the country’s accession to the European Union. Slovakia’s two previous national elections had been fought in the shadow of EU membership prospects. Both the 1998 and 2002 elections immediately preceded critical moments in the accession process—the choice of candidate states in 1998 and the final decisions on membership invitations in 2002. Karen Henderson made the point most strongly: “While it has been argued that referendums sometimes fulfill the function of second

order national elections...Slovakia had twice experienced something approaching the reverse: national elections, in 1998 and 2002, that were in part referendums about whether Slovakia should join the EU."¹ Given the strength of pro-integration sentiment, which was rising toward the eightieth percentiles by the late 1990s, I would rephrase this formulation to suggest that the referendum quality of these elections consisted of the question of whether Slovakia would be *able* to join the EU, or which party could best deliver on membership. As Henderson noted, "the vital question was not whether [Slovaks] wanted the EU, but whether the EU wanted them."²

In 1998 Vladimír Mečiar lost the election and hence the key impediment to EU acceptance of Slovakia was removed. The 2002 results secured the conditions for a final push.³ The two right-of-center coalition governments under SDKU leader Mikuláš Dzurinda that served from 1998 to 2006 strove, successfully, to cement Slovakia's case for inclusion in the 2004 EU enlargement. Tactically, one of the centerpiece components of that effort was the inclusion of the Hungarian Minority Coalition (SMK) in both governments. The alignment strategy to please Europe in the case is quite evident, and noticeable in Romania and Bulgaria as well; for the EU, ethnic minority parties were the preferred coalition partners, and radical nationalist participation a source of EU concern.

Lacking its own minority rights *acquis* at the collapse of Communism, the European Union's⁴ expectations about respect for minority rights protection was often *ad hoc*, and rested on the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993 rather than on developed community law.

¹ Karen Henderson, "EU Accession and the New Slovak Consensus," *West European Politics* 27:4 (September, 2004), 653.

² Henderson, 656.

³ By 2002, the incumbent government urged voters to let it "finish what we started" and take that last "one more step (one last step is needed to the EU and NATO...with us you'll make it). The SDKU, in its famous peaceable kingdom billboard (a cat and dog entwined together) reminded voters that the party had managed to maintain a fractious coalition: "Thanks to that, we are on the threshold of NATO and the EU."

⁴ The European Union was still the European Economic Communities in 1989, but for simplicity's sake, I will refer to the "European Union" throughout. For a critique of the EU's minority rights conditionality, see Kyriaki Topidi, "The Limits of EU Conditionality: Minority Rights in Slovakia," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 1 (2003), 20-29.

However, all states with substantial minorities were well aware that minority treatment by the government was under scrutiny; hence, the elevation of the SMK to a coalition partner was accompanied by policy adjustments in the eroded minority rights regime of the Mečiar period.

The 2006 elections that brought Fico to power, however, occurred in a very different international strategic context, one in which Slovakia's European fate no longer depended on electoral outcomes and government composition. "We got you into Europe" lacked the resonance of SDKU's (Slovak Christian Democratic Party) 2002 appeal "You need us to get into Europe."⁵ However, the economy that had earned Slovakia the epithet "Tatra Tiger" had not benefited all; Slovakia's unemployment rate of 15% in 2006 was one of the highest in Europe (and that was an improvement over the peak of 19% in 2000-2002). Small wonder, then, that Robert Fico's populist critique of the reform era found powerful electoral resonance in 2006. His new government, however constituted, would face different international and domestic constraints than had been true for the previous decade. For the purpose of this analysis, the most salient point is that the externally-induced incentives for minority inclusion, and for adherence to minority-tolerant policies, were less pronounced than in the past.

One thing, however, remained constant. It was generally impossible to form a majority coalition without including one of the two key parties aligned on the identity dimension of the party system: either the SMK or the Slovak National Party (SNS).⁶ The choice between them had been definitive for the tenor of the government's minority relations policy after past elections. The question wasn't simply, therefore, whether the SMK was in or out, but rather that its *exclusion* likely meant the *inclusion* of the SNS. SMER's leadership chose the latter option (a choice that will be discussed below), with

⁵ In 2002, the incumbent anti-Mečiar parties urged voters to let them "finish what we started" and take that last "one more step." (the billboard message: one last step is needed to the EU and NATO...with us you'll make it).

⁶ In 1998, the inclusion of the SMK produced an over-sized coalition. SMK was not necessary for a parliamentary majority. It was, however, necessary, for agenda control and constitutional change, including the transition to a directly elected presidency that was virtually the first order of business of the Dzurinda government that formed the coalition.

consequences that shaped the minority rights agenda for the Fico government.

Minority Policy Dimensions of the Fico Government:

Policy relevant to minorities in Slovakia has followed the trajectory of government change. Mečiar's second and third governments in the 1990's had ruled with the support of the Slovak National Party (SNS) and pursued minority-relevant policies that evoked European criticism, either because of overt actions (language and education laws) or omissions (the failure to pass a minority-language law to clarify and codify the language rights of non-Slovaks). By contrast, the three right-of-center governments, led by Jozef Moravčík and twice by Dzurinda, ruled with the support of the Hungarian minority coalition and proved responsive to the European push for stronger minority protections. The coalition pattern continued under Fico and his successor Iveta Radičová, with Fico's left-of-center government incorporating the SNS and Radičová's right-of-center coalition including the new Hungarian-Slovak *Most-Hid* formation (Note that Slovakia's predictable pattern of coalition alliances is by no means characteristic: in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia—the three other East and Central European countries with established and governmentally salient minority parties—both right-and left-of-center governments have ruled with minority party support. In Slovakia, the SMK has not changed sides).

Policy initiatives cannot fully capture the almost immediate change of tone in Hungarian-Slovak relations, marked by patriotic football hooliganism and the virulent controversy over the Malina/Malinová affair.⁷ The core of Fico's minority policy-making, however, was a re-balancing toward Slovak language rights in *úradný* (official) communication, and correspondingly greater ambiguity about the security of minority language rights. The first controversy emerged over the potentially restrictive impact of the 2008 amendments

⁷ Hedvig Malina was a Hungarian student in Nitra who in 2006 reported to the police that she had been assaulted for speaking Hungarian in public. The complaint generated a mini-Dreyfus affair, with one's political orientation determining whether or not to give credence to her claims. The government ultimately sided against her, and lodged perjury charges. The Fico government charged Hungary with unacceptable interference in the case. See also "Slovakia and Hungary: Trouble in Felvidek," *Transitions Online*, September 5, 2006.

to the education law regarding Hungarian language education. In the spring of 2009, the focus was on Hungarian language textbooks, with the government seeking to supplant minority-produced course materials with translations of Slovak texts. This was accompanied by a protracted disagreement about the rendering of Slovak place names. For example, the government wanted the Danube river in Slovak (*Dunaj*) rather than Hungarian (*Duna*), even in Hungarian texts. The compromise, reached in February of 2009, appears to allow the previous practice of using “deep-rooted” geographical place names in Hungarian with the Slovak names in parentheses. Additional concern was generated by the restriction of Hungarian minority *Radio Patria* broadcasts to short wave transmitters that did not reach Bratislava or eastern Slovakia.⁸

The Language Law

But the most internationally visible and resonant initiative was a revisiting of the language laws of the 1990s, as amended in 1999 under the Dzurinda government. As Martin Votruba has pointed out, a major thrust of the 1999 amendment (Act on the Use of Minority Language) had been to remove the penalties (fines) that Mečiar’s government had enacted for violations of the 1995 law establishing the primacy of the Slovak language.⁹ Hastily drafted to meet EU expectations and, therefore, imprecise in some passages, the 1999 amendment did establish rights to the use of minority language in official communications.¹⁰

In response to the status quo, the coalition program of the Fico government in 2006 included commitments to safeguard the state language and in particular the “promotion of Slovak culture in the mixed regions.” Legislation fulfilling this pledge by privileging the use of the Slovak language in official communications passed in

⁸ See Kata Eplenyi, “The Language Rights of Hungarian Communities in Slovakia and Romania: The Impacts and Perspectives of EU-Membership,” Masters Thesis, Central European University, Budapest, Nationalism Studies Program, 2009.

⁹ Votruba’s analysis of the provisions of the law is the most comprehensive I have found. Martin Votruba, “The Uncommon Language: Bratislava, Budapest, and Brussels,” Slovak Studies Association *Newsletter*, volume 33 (2009). See also Farimah Daftary and Kinga Gal, “The New Slovak Language Law: Internal or External Politics?” ECMI Working paper #8, September 2000. http://www.ecmi.de/download/-working_paper_8.pdf.

¹⁰ Eplenyi, “Language Rights.”

2009, and provoked an immediate storm of international protest, largely centered on the hefty penalties (up to 5,000 euros) that could be imposed for violations.

Media commentary tended to paint the legislation with a broad brush, whether in praise or blame, and thus to obfuscate the actual provisions. It would appear for example, that vivid scenarios of fines for an ethnically Hungarian patient speaking the native tongue to his ethnically Hungarian doctor in Hungarian are inapt, since the government maintained that only legal entities and not individuals were slated to be fined for violations.¹¹ Nor were the frequently invoked foreign-language church services under threat. However, in protecting Slovak language use, the law clearly appeared to have a chilling effect on minority language rights, and aroused vehement criticism from both the Hungarian minority and from neighboring Hungary, as well as from critics in the European Parliament.

For its part, the government tended to make somewhat misleading claims about international approval (a familiar pattern in the Mečiar years as well). Emblematic of suspicion about those claims was the opposition demand that the OSCE advisory opinion on the law be published in full, without abridgement. A slightly exasperated Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, visited Slovakia by invitation during the controversy, and chastised both sides for exaggerating the OSCE position. He reiterated the OSCE conclusion that the law met international standards, but added “that doesn’t mean that I necessarily think it’s a good law;” he said that the High Commission would like to see the fines omitted from the legislation, and warned that the normative validity of some provisions would depend on their implementation.¹² The ongoing engagement of external arbiters was evident in this contro-

¹¹ Nonetheless, the successor Radičová government introduced legislation in September of 2010 to lower fines and to explicitly lift their imposition on individuals except where citizen safety and property rights were in question, to permit non-Slovak records in minority schools, and to exempt transport, communications and postal employees. Catherine McNally, “Are Relations between Hungary and Slovakia beginning to thaw?” *CSIS*, October 5, 2010, <http://csis.org>.

¹² OSCE Envoy Proffers ‘Advice’ On Language Law, *European Dialogue*, September 30, 2009, <http://eurodialogue.org/osce/OSCE-Envoy-Proffers-Advice-On-Language-Law>; Zuzana Vaskova, “Slovakia’s Controversial Language Law,” *EU Reporter*, September 28, 2009, <http://www.eureporter.co.uk/story/slovakias-controversial-language-law>.

versy, although Slovakia was no longer constrained by mandatory monitoring.

A second feature of policy during the Fico administration was an exchange of symbolic and substantive rebuffs between the Hungarian and Slovak governments, implicitly or usually explicitly targeting the issue of loyalties to state or nation. An official state visit between Fico and Hungarian Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai, the first such in eight years, was cancelled after the language law controversy.¹³ Another unfortunate incident surrounded the unveiling of a statue of St. Stephen in the city of Komárno in August of 2009. Hungary's president László Sólyom planned to attend this event as a private citizen, but was stopped from crossing the bridge between Hungary and Slovakia after a diplomatic exchange confirmed that he would not be permitted to enter Slovakia for this purpose. The Slovak government considered this event a provocation, noting that no high Slovak official had been invited to the unveiling. In July of 2010, the newly-installed nationalist FIDESZ government in Hungary further roiled the waters by taking the incident to the European Court of Justice. (Ex-president Sólyom returned to lay a wreath at the statue without incident in August of 2010).¹⁴

The most sensitive development in Slovak-Hungarian relations occurred in the interval between the April Hungarian elections of 2010 and the June Slovak elections. A few days after its installation, the FIDESZ government, led by Viktor Orban, lobbed a political grenade into the Slovak election campaign by approving a new law on dual citizenship. By a crushing vote of 344-3 with five abstentions, the Hungarian parliament sanctioned measures that would allow ethnic Hungarians abroad to apply for citizenship as of January, 2011 even without the intention of residing in Hungary (they would not have voting rights in Hungary itself). The Fico government recalled its ambassador from Budapest, called a session of the security council, and retaliated with legislation forfeiting Slovak citizenship

¹³ Luboš Palata "Slovak Language Law: Slap in the Face," *Transitions Online*, July 13, 2009. <http://www.ceeol.com/aspx/issuedetails.aspx?issueid=f3bb1acd-4a30-4701-9d6f-6889e003d4bc&articleid=3fa741b5-2f9f-4663-9824-a43e09e7fe4b>.

¹⁴ "Maďarský exprezident Sólyom prešiel do Komárna bez problémov," *SME*, August 22, 2010.

to those taking additional Hungarian citizenship.¹⁵ Orban's somewhat baffling timing would appear likely to damage the electoral prospects of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and to bolster Slovak nationalist voting. The European community could only watch ineffectively, urge a negotiated settlement to the question, and ponder what citizenship norms might be appropriate to cross-border minorities.¹⁶

Overall, the Fico government's minority rights initiatives bear a pronounced resemblance to those of the Mečiar era, the last time the SNS was in government and the governmental orientation stressed the risks to Slovak identity of a multi-ethnic state. As in the case of the Mečiar governments, external concerns seemed largely ineffectual in modifying the course of policy-making or ameliorating relations with Hungary. The policy-making dynamics, however, are less complex than the partisan political dynamics, to which I now turn.

The Fico Government and Its Impact on the Identity Dimension of the Party System.

Although minority relations may appear to be only a delimited segment of the larger political picture, in two important respects they were arguably central to Fico's governance because of the impact they have had on coalition formation in 2006 and 2010 and on coalition politics in between. Indeed, Fico's government notably shaped the party system itself, but not only in terms of its national identity dimension. In both respects the impact had international ramifications. I now want to focus on this larger picture.

¹⁵ Previous Slovak law allowed for dual citizenship, but with certain provisions that could be adapted to bar dual citizenship in this particular instance. See Dagmar Kusa, "The Slovak Question and the Slovak Answer: Citizenship during the Quest for National Self-Determination and after," in Rainer Baubock, Bernhard Perching and Wiebke Sievers, eds., *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe* (Amsterdam: IMISCOE Research, University of Amsterdam Press, 2009), 275-303. Note that Romania remained silent over Orban's move, although it equally affected Romania's large Hungarian minority. The Romanian government had previously used Orban's ploy in extending citizenship rights to ethnically Romanian Moldovans in 2009, and so could hardly complain about a similar law in Hungary. See *Slovak Spectator*, August 10, 2010.

¹⁶ See for example, Rainer Baubock, ed., "Dual Citizenship for Transborder Minorities? How to Respond to the Hungarian-Slovak Tit-for-Tat," *EU Working Papers*, RSCAS 2010/75 (2010, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy).

Government formation in post-communist states has consistently proved challenging, although the challenges have varied systematically from state to state. A common thread through most of the post-communist era to date, however, has been the Euro-relevance of coalition choices. In the 2002 election campaign, *SMER*'s inaugural effort, Fico refused to name preferred coalition partners or to rule out the HZDS (although he emphatically rejected a cabinet shared with either Mečiar or Dzurinda, leaders he styled as representative of an old, corrupt generation).¹⁷ Some analysts have plausibly suggested that his failure to exclude the HZDS raised voter doubts about a Fico-led government's capacity to complete the EU integration project and helped to account for his last minute sag in the polls.¹⁸

The coalition formation process after the 2006 elections was undoubtedly critical to the subsequent pattern of party system dynamics in ways I will investigate below. Frontrunner Fico had promised a coalition that Europe could approve. In the late stages of the campaign, some analysts dismissed the possibility of a *SMER*-HZDS-SNS coalition (including two political formations most unpopular in Europe because of their perceived demagogic, authoritarian and nationalist leadership) as a product of incumbent Dzurinda's fear-mongering. *SMER* derided this as a bogey-man. Fico characterized the coalition as a "specter" created by Dzurinda.¹⁹ *SMER*'s Vice President Robert Kalinak told reporters, "*Smer* will not be part of any government that is not internationally accepted, and I think that's a pretty clear statement that you can deduce all kinds of things from."²⁰But apparently *not* the coalition that actually emerged in 2006.

In the event, the "worst case scenario" was not merely a scare tactic. The victorious *Smer* did indeed invite the HZDS and the SNS into a coalition, albeit explicitly without either of their leaders, in cabinet positions. And Fico assured the public, at home and abroad, that the presence of the SNS in government did not dilute existing commitments to minority and human rights, again signaling that minority parties were not pariahs. The Bratislava daily *Nový čas* dub-

¹⁷ Fico was born in 1964, Dzurinda in 1955 and Mečiar in 1942.

¹⁸ Tim Haughton, "We Will finish What We've Started: The 2002 Parliamentary Elections,"

Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics 19:4 (December, 2003), 65-90.

¹⁹ *Transitions Online*, June 19, 2006; TASR, June 12, 2006.

²⁰ Interview with Robert Kalinak, *Slovak Spectator*, June 12, 2006.

bed this the “you can’t be serious” coalition—and it prompted an immediate external response.

The European Union cannot dictate who is eligible to govern a member state. This issue was clarified with the case of Austria, a neutral state that joined the EU in 1995, once membership ceased to be associated with the divisions of the Cold War. Shortly thereafter, the use of conditionality after accession to membership received a major setback. In 2000, Austria breached a long-standing but informal West European consensus against the inclusion of the radical right in democratic governments—a so-called “cordon sanitaire” against extremist parties--when Austria’s Christian Democrats accepted Jörg Haider and his Freedom Party as junior coalition partners. Appalled that a party led by a man who attended SS reunions was included in a member government, the EU created an impromptu and awkward state of “diplomatic isolation” that proved largely counterproductive, and embarrassing in its implication that the European Union, riddled with its own democratic deficits, had the right to judge the democratically elected governments of its members. The EU backed down after seven months.²¹

If the EU wouldn’t act, the European party formation in which *SMER* was an observing member—the Party of European Socialists (PES)--was not similarly constrained, although ultimately equally ineffectual. PES publicly expressed “concern and deep misgivings” over Fico’s coalition choices, as well as “shock” and “deep disgust,” for good measure. Club deputy chair Johannes Swoboda expressed doubt that such a government could uphold European values;²² and the Belgian socialist MEP asked “Don’t you feel ashamed as a social

²¹ EU concern persists. The long-term legacy of the abortive effort to assert European values in the Austrian case, and to provide for response to future democratic deviations is Article 7 of both the Nice Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty, which provides a so-called “emergency brake,” a decision-making mechanism to impose sanctions on member states that manifest a “serious breach” of European values specified in the treaty under Article 2. Approving the Lisbon Treaty thus does provide a new conditionality mechanism; it remains to be seen how badly it is needed and whether it will have any practical utility. See <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st06/st06655.en08.pdf>

²² “Evropští socialiste znepokojeni vznikající koalici na Slovensku,” ČTK, June 29, 2006.

democrat of forming a coalition with a party known for its xenophobia?"²³

In October 2006, PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen announced:

*The PES resolution refers specifically to the Declaration "For a modern, pluralist and tolerant Europe" adopted by PES Congress in 2001 in Berlin which states "all PES parties adhere to the following principles... to refrain from any form of political alliance or co-operation at all levels with any political party which incites or attempts to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred."*²⁴

Only in 2008 was *SMER'S* membership application conditionally reinstated after both *SMER* and SNS submitted letters confirming their commitment to minority rights, a largely declarative gesture.

But this so-called "nightmare coalition" with the HZDS and SNS was not inevitable. The contrasting case of Bulgaria is instructive. The victorious Borisov party in 2009 ruled out a coalition with the Turkish minority MRF during the election campaign as part of the incumbent government he attacked. Like Fico, candidate Borisov employed a populist discourse—what Pop-Eleches would call the new centrist populism²⁵—and an appeal that, while taking pot shots at minorities, was not radically nationalist. His "outsider" strategy, however, dictated a rejection of all the status quo parties, and particularly the incumbents.

Fico, on the other hand, although not loath to criticize minorities, had moderated his populist appeals and reoriented to social democracy by the 2006 election.²⁶ Fico gave serious consideration to a KDH-/MKP coalition, but could not get agreement on it—Miroslav Kusý notes that the KDH leadership was badly and bitterly split on the possibility, with some insisting on a set of moral issues (such as ban-

²³ *Slovak Spectator*, September 11, 2006.

²⁴ <http://www.pes.org/en/news/smer-suspended-pes-political-family>.

²⁵ Pop-Eleches, "Throwing out the Bums: Protest Voting and Unorthodox Parties after Communism," *World Politics* 62 (2010), 221-60.

²⁶ See Kevin Deegan-Krause and Tim Haughton, "Toward a More Useful Conceptualization of Populism: Types and Degrees of Populist Appeals in the Case of Slovakia," *Politics and Policy* 37:4 (2009), 821-41.

ning same-sex marriage and contraception); KDH deliberations were so protracted that Fico ultimately gave up.²⁷ KDH's hesitation was the mostly widely cited reason for the sinking of the alternative *SMER-SMK-KDH* coalition, both by media and coalition partners.²⁸ Despite the programmatic dissonances with *SMER*, such an alignment had the attraction for KDH and SMK of averting the coalition that did in fact emerge.

In any case, Fico is a clever politician, and he realized that the SNS and HZDS would be easier to undercut. Fico could and did steal some of the SNS political clothes and a bit of its electorate by annexing the nationalist issue—a kind of electoral poaching that would have been impossible against the KDH and SMK--and in Mečiar's HZDS he had an aging and politically dying junior partner. Fico is also something of a control freak—he immediately sidelined Monika Flašíková-Beňová, a public critic of his coalition choice, at the next party congress by stripping her and others of leadership roles—he was also canny in avoiding the appointment of too many MPs as ministers, who if discarded, might return to parliament and defect from the party). His final coalition choices therefore, would be more malleable, provided he could manage the public response, in particular, to SNS outbursts.

In the new government, Mečiar's party alarmingly claimed the Justice portfolio. SNS portfolios included Agriculture, Regional Development and Education, all highly salient policy domains for minorities. Agriculture and Regional Development, previously held by SMK, are germane to economic conditions in the ethnically mixed areas of southern Slovakia, which are generally more rural and less developed than the north or west. And putting education policy in the hands of SNS raised concerns that minority issues would get short shrift.

²⁷ Miroslav Kusý, "Catastrophic Scenario in Bratislava," *The Analyst: Central and Eastern European Review* 2 (2006), 37. The KDH division was so pronounced as to cause a leadership crisis and resignations from the party leadership in its aftermath.

²⁸ See for example the comments by Ivan Mikloš in *Hospodárske noviny*, June 29, 2006: "The European Peoples Party won't understand very well, how it is possible that these three EPP member parties weren't able to reach agreement. In this sense, I think that the responsibility for this situation lies especially on the KDH." In this case, Mikloš blamed the KDH for balking at bringing the HZDS into a SDKU-KDH-SMK coalition.

Two related effects of this government's tenure on party system dynamics are worth noting. At the majority nationalist end of the identity continuum, one can visualize Fico as a political vampire, draining his coalition partners of standing and voters. Fico preempted the national issue from his more volatile and extremist coalition colleague, Ján Slota of the SNS, by challenging the national sentiment of historians at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, as well as of the media, both of whom he accused of exhibiting "un-Slovak" tendencies. Fico proclaimed 2008 as the "Year of the Slovak Nation." He re-constructed pre-national history with a claim on the Great Moravian Empire having consisted of "ancient Slovaks"²⁹ and commissioned a statue of warrior King (Prince) Svätopluk for the Bratislava Castle courtyard—an equestrian monument installed just before the elections in 2010 amid great controversy about the historicity of the claims made about his ethnicity, the Byzantine cross on his shield, and even whether he was actually a king.³⁰

From the outset, Fico tended to overlook rather than to chastise the SNS and its incendiary leader. He was content to let Slota's outrageous statements pillory his own credibility. A case in point: Slota apparently sought to launch his party's electoral campaign in early 2010 with the pronouncement that Hungary was planning a military invasion of Slovakia to revise the Treaty of Trianon.³¹

Fico did chastise the spectacular SNS corruption in office. Both in the 1990s and in the Fico government, the SNS has been noted for ministerial corruption. The SNS held two portfolios—Construction and Regional development and Environment—in the Fico government, in addition to a deputy prime-ministership. Both incumbents at Construction and Regional Development were dismissed in quick succession over the so-called "Bulletin-Board" tender, in which public procurement procedures were violated in favor of an in-house

²⁹ "Fico's Revisionist History," *Transitions Online*, February 29, 2008.

³⁰ Fico expressed the hope that the statue would become a national pilgrimage site, but the statue immediately became politicized as the extremist group "Our Slovakia" came to its rescue (a commission on its dissolution has been formed) without an assembly permit. As of November 2010, the party's website has youtube video of riot police blocking the pilgrimage. Meanwhile, anti-racist groups mobilized to challenge the party. Fico also appropriated the 18th century social bandit Jánošík as a Social Democrat.

³¹ *The Slovak Spectator*, March 24, 2010.

process that awarded contracts to two firms with close ties to the SNS leader Ján Slota.

SNS Environment Minister Jaroslav Izak, who was asked to resign for his ministry's mishandling of EU environmental funds, was followed by Ján Chrbet, whose forced resignation was triggered by a scandal surrounding the awarding of carbon emissions contracts on terms unfavorable to the government. When *his* successor from the SNS, Viliam Turský, was also removed for murky contract awards, Prime Minister Fico announced that it was time to take the environmental portfolio away from the SNS.³² (Startlingly, Slota demanded the human and minority rights portfolio in exchange for the lost environmental slot.) Hence, by the end of his term in office, Fico had succeeded not only in pre-empting Slota with a more respectable nationalism, but also in discrediting him and his party on the politically winning issue of anti-corruption (a useful diversion from *SMER's* own corruption problems).³³

By 2010, the debilitated SNS squeaked into the subsequent parliament by only a tenth of a percentage point over the electoral threshold and lost more than half of its previous seats (down from twenty to nine)—a voting hemorrhage that pre-election opinion polls suggest went to Fico.³⁴ Tibor Kis concludes that Fico “offered voters a European alternative to Vladimír Mečiar’s nationalist L’S-HZDS and a social and ‘Slovak’ alternative relative to centre-right organiza-

³² See *The Slovak Spectator*, August 31, 2009.

[http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/36352/11/people often get what they want not what they need.html](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/36352/11/people+often+get+what+they+want+not+what+they+need.html).

³³ SNS corruption problems might have been predicted from its previous term in office, and by the general trends in ministerial corruption region-wide. In the overall universe of cabinet ministers in 13 post-communist EU members and candidate members serving between 1990 and 2009, minority politicians were just about exactly average in their involvement in corruption scandals (13%). The majority nationalist party ministers, by contrast, were close to twice as likely to be scandal prone (23%) as the norm, and thereby more embarrassing as coalition partners. Involvement in corruption scandals as used here does not imply eventually proven guilt in a court of law. (Corruption Involvement is coded if the minister is formally investigated by law enforcement agencies or parliament, arrested and tried, or documented as engaging in suspect behavior by a corruption agency).

³⁴ See Kevin Deegan-Krause’s *Pozorblog, 2010 Slovak Parliamentary Elections: Post-Election Report*, July 14, 2010, <http://www.pozorblog.com/>.

tions.”³⁵ Fico appears, indeed, to have been too successful in this regard: As Mesík notes, “By attracting SNS as well as HZDS voters, Fico successfully cannibalized his partners in the government and only woke up to the day when his by far strongest party did not have partners to form a government with.”

Hungarian Minority Politics

If Fico proved effective (and somewhat self-defeating) in absorbing votes from his coalition partners in the 2010 elections, the exclusion of the SMK from government also had ramifications for minority party politics. At first, the SMK’s position on the opposition benches had some echoes of the 1990s. Amidst a general disarray after losing power, it was striking that the Fico era started with the failure of the ethnic Slovak opposition parties to back the SMK on issues like the Hedviga Malinová /Malina Hedvig case. The three opposition parties did not meet for four months until the controversy regarding Deputy Agriculture Minister Marian Zahumenský.

Second, the transition to opposition acerbated longstanding tensions within the SMK. As long as the SMK was in government, tensions within the party could be curbed. Going into opposition meant not only a loss of policy influence, but also a time of reckoning. In March of 2007, the popular and moderate Béla Bugár moved on his less moderate vice-chair—the venerable communist-era dissident Miklós Duray—by seeking to abolish the vice-chair position; the effort rebounded, leading to an upset victory for the party leadership by Pál Csáky. The new SMK was ever more closely identified with Hungary and particularly with FIDESZ, a stance that proved an excellent foil for Slota and the SNS. The SMK was “increasingly perceived and portrayed by Slovak politicians as an extraterritorial branch of FIDESZ.”³⁶

³⁵ Tibor Kis, “Smer: Success Story or Scandal?” *The Analyst-Central and Eastern European Review* 1 (2008), 67.

³⁶ Mesík, Juraj, *Slovakia 2010: An Election with Only Limited Choice* (Prague: Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2010), p. 1. [https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:-NXmv_IM53BAJ:www.boell.cz/downloads/slovakia-2010\(1\).pdf+Slovakia+2010:-+An+Election+with+Only+Limited+Choice&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEE_SjAbC2uqap66j5MK3mL54uKxbdb6uwiYAnKG8PdcOnGr7TN3cTV4UToaJbphV DhhWjlamVNcStQ_DriBhYlnWQ4wn6V9PW9qnWFarJSCkyf_JhoVJx-2g9JpgEj7MPq-DXaaQb&sig=AHIEtbQZam6lz-BjubssUvDtT73Na95dzA](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:-NXmv_IM53BAJ:www.boell.cz/downloads/slovakia-2010(1).pdf+Slovakia+2010:-+An+Election+with+Only+Limited+Choice&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEE_SjAbC2uqap66j5MK3mL54uKxbdb6uwiYAnKG8PdcOnGr7TN3cTV4UToaJbphV DhhWjlamVNcStQ_DriBhYlnWQ4wn6V9PW9qnWFarJSCkyf_JhoVJx-2g9JpgEj7MPq-DXaaQb&sig=AHIEtbQZam6lz-BjubssUvDtT73Na95dzA)

Csáky's orientation to the protection of Hungarian interests was to look outward. An example was his meeting with László Tőkés, a central figure of the hard-line wing of Romania's minority party UDMR, and Csáky's attendance as an observer at the Carpathian Autonomy Council that Tőkés had founded. The two leaders apparently discussed the idea of a cross-national mini-minority parliament. Nothing could have been better calculated to play to ethnic Slovak fears about Slovak Hungarian loyalties.³⁷

In 2008, Bugár left the SMK and founded his own party—one that signaled its moderation on national issues with the name *Most-Hid* (bridge in Slovak and Hungarian). Csáky professed to believe, along with Slota, that *Most-Hid* was a stalking horse (actually a Trojan horse) created and funded by *SMER*. Beyond that, he refused to discuss future cooperation with *Most-Hid* on the grounds that it wouldn't make it into parliament.³⁸ Csáky was quite wrong. Defying the pre-election polls, *Most-Hid* polled over eight percent, nearly doubling the vote of Csáky's SMK, and replacing it in parliament.

What did the 2010 vote mean? Were Hungarian voters seeking moderation, as some media analysts said? Or was it a coordination failure, with Hungarians in Slovakia voting strategically in hopes of getting both SMK and *Most-Hid* into parliament? (This view would explain why *Most-Hid* did so much better than the last pre-election polls suggested—ethnic Hungarian voters, seeing that SMK was comfortably over the threshold, may have diverted votes to *Most-Hid*)³⁹ As in the case of many party schisms, then, the upshot was a crippling of Hungarian minority representation in parliament.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Csáky narušil tabu," *SME*, September 29, 2008.

³⁸ "Csáky: Nepôjdeme do vlády za každú cenu," *SME*, May 7, 2010, http://volby.sme.sk/clanok_tlac.asp?cl=5363302

³⁹ *The Slovak Spectator* June 21, 2010; some SMK leaders embraced this theory. "Csáky končí, SMK hľadá šéfa" *SME*, June 14, 2010, http://volby.sme.sk/clanok_tlac.asp?cl=5421864.

⁴⁰ A pre-election poll in 2010 indicated that *Most-Hid* was drawing almost 60% of its supporters from SMK, 18% from first time voters, 5% from former non-voters and the rest from other parties. *The Slovak Spectator*, June 3, 2010. The number of Hungarians in the *Most-Hid* delegation itself was also lowered by the preferential voting of supporters of OKS (Civic Conservative Party), with whom *Most-Hid* formed a joint candidate slate. See Viera Žuborová, Viera (2011), "Marketizácia vonkajšej reklamy v parlamentných voľbách 2010 v Slovenskej republike," *Acta Politologica* 3: 1 (2011):7; statistics at "Výsledky preferenčného hlasovania: Výs-

Conclusion:

Is there reason to expect a durable effect of the Fico era for identity politics in Slovakia? The policy footprint was not especially deep, and the succeeding Radičová government mitigated some of its impact on Hungarian minority relations. The Fico language law was partially modified in December of 2010, restricting its use, but disappointing minorities—who deemed the amendment “less bad”—by its retention of the penalties for improper language use.⁴¹ 2011 saw an initiative to resolve the dual citizenship issue by joint agreement with the Hungarian government, although to date without a favorable response from the Orban government.⁴²

The long-term party system effects are less predictable. For example, while Mečiar’s slide into oblivion even deepened in the 2012 election, sliding to a mere percentage point of the electorate, it is less obvious that Slota’s SNS is on the brink of extinction despite the narrow escape in 2010 and the failure to return to parliament in 2012. Earlier, the SNS had survived a schism (in some respects the mirror image of what happened to SMK after 2006) that actually knocked it out of parliament in 2002; it reconsolidated and returned. In 2012, as well, the party was fractured by the expulsion of deputy leader Anna Belousová, who contested the 2012 election with her own party Nation and Justice. Despite the SNS record of corruption and outrageousness, yet another reunion of the party leadership might resuscitate it, although service in Fico’s government was definitely a poisoned chalice. In the 2010 election, the shrinkage of the SNS deprived Fico of a coalition partner and the prime ministership. As a result of the March, 2012 elections, Fico no longer needed that assistance, since his SMER became the first Slovak party since inde-

ledky volieb do NR SR: 12.06.2010,” Most-Híd website, <http://www.most-hid-ke.sk/sk/volby-nrsr2010-preferencne-hlasy>.

⁴¹ “Language Act takes a “less bad” form,” *Minority Report*, Monthly Bulletin on the Hungarian Community in Slovakia, Issue 12-2010, <http://www.freeweb.hu/-mkdsz1/pdf/MR-01-2011.pdf>.

⁴² “Hungary: “Nem!” to Slovak Dual Citizenship Proposal,” *The Daily.sk*, posted 12 July 2011, <http://www.thedaily.sk/2011/07/12/top-news/hungary-nem-to-slovak-dual-citizenship-proposal/>.

The Fico government, elected in March of 2012, signaled that it would slightly modify its earlier draconian response by allowing dual citizenship to Slovaks actually residing in the other country.

pendence to win an outright majority of the parliamentary seats (83 out of 150).⁴³

As for the emergence of two major partisan competitors for the Hungarian electorate, the ambiguities in interpreting *Most-Híd's* victory over the SMK stand in the way of a clear prediction. Past electoral outcomes show that being in power has not previously eroded the support of the minority electorate, either in Slovakia or in the parallel cases of Bulgaria and Romania. On that basis, it might be possible to argue for *Most-Híd* to further consolidate its position. However, what Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia also had in common until this election was the dominance of a single minority party or electoral coalition.⁴⁴ The story may be quite different with an alternative and established minority-based party challenging each decision, even from outside parliament.

The municipal elections of November 2010 and the parliamentary elections of 2012, which showed the two Hungarian parties splitting their vote, did not clarify the picture. Although an extra-parliamentary party like the SMK could not promise influence at the center to woo voters, the SMK retained its established organizational base and its government subsidy and thus retains a presence in politics (it also retains its representation in the European parliament). Local party organizations generally hold the decision-making power to run joint candidates with other parties or to cooperate in local coalitions after elections, and there was indeed some limited cooperation, but also cases, as in the Komárno mayor's race, where dividing the Hungarian vote opened the way to victory for an independent Slovak candidate.

The basis for cooperation, however, is shaky. The SMK has grown ever closer to the nationalist Fidesz party in Hungary, and proudly announced in March 2011 that Hungary had incorporated three SMK proposals into its new constitution. Moreover, the SMK party chair, Jozsef Berenyi, actually announced in January of 2011 that he was applying for Hungarian citizenship under the controversial new law. These maneuvers only underline the SMK's distance from the more moderate *Most-Híd*. During the winter of 2011, de-

⁴³ *Sme*, March 11, 2012.

⁴⁴ It is true that before 1998, the SMK was not a single entity; rather, it was a group of Hungarian parties which ran on a single slate, not as competitors.

spite the clear electoral incentives to do so, the two parties failed to reach any agreement on electoral cooperation in 2012, and contested the parliamentary elections completely separately. Once again, SMK barely missed parliamentary representation, while *Most-Hid* survived, although it lost more than a percentage point and one MP in the 2012 elections.

In closing, it would appear that electoral outcomes and coalition choices matter more than external pressures for normative conformity on minority rights issues, just as they did in the pre-accession period before 2004. Government policies on minorities in Slovakia respond primarily to partisan domestic constituencies, and vary according to the government in power. Even though minority inclusion in government was known to be desirable to Brussels, once Slovakia was safely in the European Union, minority inclusion was not jettisoned, but rather subject to the same kinds of political logic and choices that determined which identity-based party would be included in government before 2004.

SLOVAKIA'S 2010 ELECTION AND ITS AFTERMATH¹

Kevin Deegan-Krause²

The academic publishing cycle is not known for being particularly quick, but it is usually fast enough to beat the electoral cycle in most countries and thereby allow articles considering the consequences of one election without immediately requiring consideration of the next one. Not so for Slovakia. The country's political change in the early 2010's left no time for leisurely consideration and this article, which began its life as a review of Slovakia's 2010 election, must deal not only with the birth of Slovakia's 2010 government but also its early death in 2012.

On 12 June 2010 citizens of Slovakia went to the polls for parliamentary elections for the seventh time since Communist Party rule ended in 1989. A plurality—more than one third—voted for the party of incumbent prime minister Robert Fico. However, Slovakia's system of proportional representation does not give any particular advantage to the largest party, and Fico again found it necessary to seek coalition partners to muster the 50%+1 of parliamentary votes necessary to form a government. Unfortunately for Fico, a decline in support for his past government partners and antagonistic relationships with all other parties made it impossible for him to muster the necessary 76 votes. Fico's opponents quickly arranged a majority coalition and on 8 July 2010, Iveta Radičová of the Slovak Democratic and

¹Large segments of this article were first published online at: http://themonkeycage.org/blog/2010/07/13/2010_slovak_parliamentary_elec/, <http://www.pozorblog.com/2010/07/2010-slovak-parliamentary-elections-post-election-report/>, <http://www.pozorblog.com/2012/03/2012-parliamentary-elections-in-slovakia-the-building-blocs-of-success/> and as part of an interview in *SME*, <http://www.pozorblog.com/2012/03/slovakias-electoral-politics-an-interview-with-sme/>.

²I am grateful to Sharon Fisher, Tim Haughton, Adrian Harmata, Carol Leff, Vladimír Krivy, Darina Malová, Marek Rybář, Sharon Wolchik, the entire staff at the Institute for Public Affairs in Bratislava and many others who have helped me to understand Slovakia's politics over the past two decades. I am indebted to the Department of Political Science of Comenius University in Bratislava for logistical support and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board for the financial support that contributed to this article.

Christian Union (SDKÚ) became the prime minister of a coalition government consisting of four parties with pro-market orientations and relatively moderate views on intra-ethnic cooperation between Slovaks and Hungarians.

Radičová was not only a new face in the premiership but a new *kind* of face in a country with relatively weak representation of women in positions of power. Slovakia differs little from its neighbors in this regard: the Visegrad Four—a regional grouping consisting of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary—has had only one other female prime minister in the last twenty years (Poland's Hanna Suchocka in the early 1990's) and although several of the other countries in the region have had female presidents (Latvia) or prime ministers (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Croatia) women still remain the exception in post-communist European politics and the incoming 2010 government of the neighboring Czech Republic was criticized for having no women at all.³ Even Radičová's success did not extend to others: her own government had only one other female cabinet minister, and Slovakia's new parliament actually had fewer female deputies than it did in its previous term. And like every other female prime minister in the region, Radičová did not serve a full term. After just fifteen months in power, intra-coalition conflict produced a vote of no confidence that forced early elections and led to Radičová's departure from politics, at least for the moment.

The emergence and collapse of Radičová's government point to patterns more fundamental than the career path of any particular political leader. Slovakia's political competition functions in three distinct dimensions—one related to economic questions, another to national questions and a third to the functioning of political systems. Analysis tends to settle at one of three levels, all of which have some claim to the truth, provided that we understand the context, and how we understand Slovakia's recent political shifts depends heavily on what we are looking for. This article works outward from the simplest of these to the most complex, looking at how the underlying dynamics shaped election results in 2010 and the post-election trajectory of Radičová's government.

³Appeltová, Michaela, 2010, "Ve vládě není ani jedna žena, proč?", 30 June, available online: <http://padesatprocent.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/ve-vlade-neni-ani-jedna-zena-proc>, last accessed 24 May 2012.

The Three Dimensions of Slovakia's Party Competition.

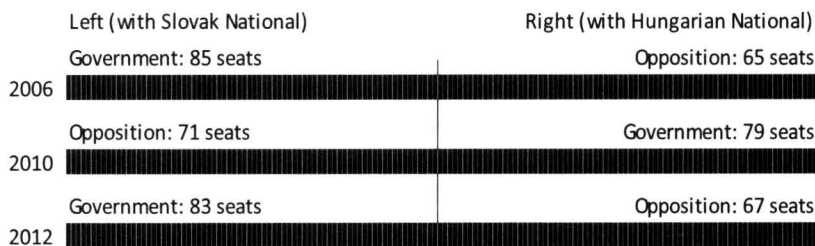
Dimension One: Right Coalition Wins, Left Coalition Loses.

The most superficial (but not unimportant) level of analysis looks at coalitions and oppositions and involves a one-dimensional space. "Left" and "right" have not always been useful in understanding Slovakia's political space, but they have become more relevant in recent years, especially since the "right" neo-liberal reforms of the Dzurinda government between 2002 and 2006 and Fico's "left" response in the four years that followed. Using the left-right dimensions as shorthand reveals the 2010 election as a handover of power from one side to the other with a swing of seven seats in Slovakia's 150 seat parliament from Fico's coalition to Radičová's. (Fico's coalition dropped from 85 seats in 2006 to 71 in 2010, though Fico's party itself grew by twelve seats). For the purposes of governing, this made all the difference, shifting the parliamentary majority from Fico to Radičová.

Figure 1. Changes in relative bloc size in Slovakia, one-dimension, 2006-2012.

Dark grey includes left and Slovak-national (Fico 2006-2010, 2012-present).

Light grey includes right and Hungarian-national (Radičová, 2010-2012).



That majority did not last, however, and early elections in 2012 moved the respective positions of the two blocs almost precisely back to where they had been in 2006. Although observers viewed these election results as a disaster for the right, the latter actually emerged with a stronger position in parliament than it had held during the first Fico government. The difference, of course, was that in 2006 the Fico government's 85 voters were split between Fico and two not-so-docile coalition partners, whereas in 2012 all 83 seats of

the governing majority lay in the hands of Fico's own well-disciplined political party.⁴

Dimension Two: Left and Right Parties Gain, Slovak and Hungarian National Parties Lose.

Of course "left" and "right" are not usually sufficient for understanding political competition, and in addition to the left-right axis of competition that has recently dominated governments, Slovakia has a clear competitive axis related to national questions. The current dominant dimension includes and overshadows another one related to national issues. According to this two-dimensional framework, Fico's first government represented a coalition between "anti-market left" and "Slovak national" whereas the Radičová government (like the Dzurinda government that preceded Fico before 2006) is a coalition between "pro-market right" and "Hungarian national."

Analysis of election results according to the four blocs defined by these two dimensions produces a rather different set of judgments. Although the total vote share of "right" parties of the incoming government increased by five percentage points from 2006 to 2010, the vote share of the "left" party in the outgoing government—Fico's "Direction-Social Democracy" (*Smer-SD*)—increased by even more. Corresponding to the gains by both left and right were major losses in the "Slovak national" bloc: the Slovak National Party under Ján Slota fell catastrophically from 12% to 5%, squeaking over the barrier for parliamentary representation by just two thousand votes out of two-and-a-half million cast; and Vladimír Mečiar, once the sun and the moon of Slovakia's politics, continued a remarkably long and gradual slide into obscurity, falling below the barrier and out of parliament altogether. (In the 2012 election Mečiar completed the slide with a drop to less than 1%; he resigned from the leadership of his party in April 2012).⁵ Like Jaroslav Kaczyński in Poland in 2007, Fico could justifiably claim that it was not he, but rather *his partners* who had lost the election (though Mečiar publicly suggested that,

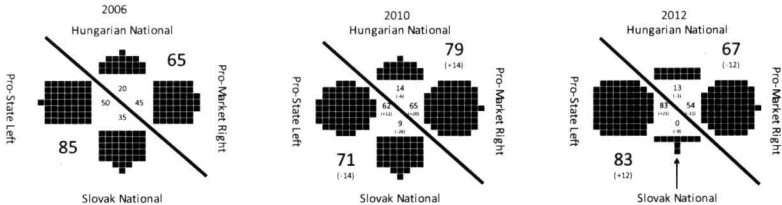
⁴ Marek Rybar and Kevin Deegan-Krause, 2009, "Party Democracy and Party Competitiveness in Slovakia: Is There A Trade-Off?," Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Session of workshops, Lisbon.

⁵ *SME*, 2012, "Vladimír Mečiar odchádza bez nástupcu", 27 April, available online: <http://www.sme.sk/c/6356308/vladimir-meciar-odchadza-bez-nastupcu.html>, last accessed, 24 May 2012.

having undermined his partners to maximize his own party's gain, Fico deserved his fate).

Figure 2: Changes in relative bloc size in Slovakia, two-dimensions, 2006-2012.

Figure indicates lost seats in light grey and gained seats in dark grey.



Fico did not significantly alter his strategy for the 2012 election but he avoided the same fate because of his party's own increased support. By mid-2011 *Smer*'s poll numbers were strong enough to suggest that it could potentially win a majority of seats by itself. In that circumstance, *Smer* had no further need for coalition partners and had an additional incentive to push its former partners fall below the threshold and take a share of seats that would originally have gone to them. The encouraging numbers also permitted *Smer* to run a careful and measured campaign designed to avoid losing voters rather than gaining new ones. The party's success in this regard can be measured in its addition of twenty-one new parliamentary seats, though this must be understood in the broader context that, although *Smer* alone achieved 83 seats, this was several seats fewer than *Smer* had achieved in its coalition with Slovak national parties in 2006. Although Fico clearly won the election of 2012, the parties of the right together obtained more seats than they had in 2006, in large part thanks to the decline of the national parties.

Dimension Three: Slovak National Voters Move Left, Anti-Corruption Voters Move Right (for now).

One of the most striking aspects of these shifts in electoral support is the finding of two opinion polls conducted before the election that the exodus of voters from Slovak national parties was not distributed evenly to left and right. In fact, nearly all of it went to the left,

mainly to Fico's *Smer*.⁶ This is not surprising since Fico played on national themes for some time before the election. For the electoral math to work out, however, this must mean that some of Fico's voters also went elsewhere, and the polls suggest that at least some of them went to the new party of the right, SaS (Freedom and Solidarity). These shifts among blocs are hard to explain even using the two-dimensional array of economic and national competition. The answer requires a third dimension, one that arrays voters according to their willingness to tolerate corruption and search for established leaders to resolve these problems. This dimension is hard to identify because its players change sides: the anti-corruption party of one election may become the corrupt but experienced party of the next election.⁷ Adding this dimension can help make sense of a voter's jump from *Smer*, which in 2002 and 2006 attracted a significant share of the anti-corruption electorate, to the Freedom and Solidarity which shared few programmatic positions with *Smer*, but did promote itself as the answer to the country's corruption problems and, as a new party was itself not (or at least not yet) corrupt. Corruption sensitivity may also explain much of the shift from the two Slovak national parties to the by-no-means-clean but still less corrupt *Smer*, a shift which is less surprising because Fico had already gone quite far in adopting Slovak national themes. It also conforms to polls showing that younger voters and new voters within the Hungarian electorate shifted from the more established of two Hungarian parties to its newcomer alternative, *Most-Híd* (Bridge).

Slovakia's political shift in 2010 thus reflects not a fundamental shift from left and right but only a left-to-right shift in the votes of those most highly sensitive to corruption. Such a shift endures for only one election until the emergence of another new anti-corruption party in the next election cycle. *Smer*'s return to *relatively* clean status during a period out of government ended with the "Gorilla" scandal that linked his political opponents with improper party funding

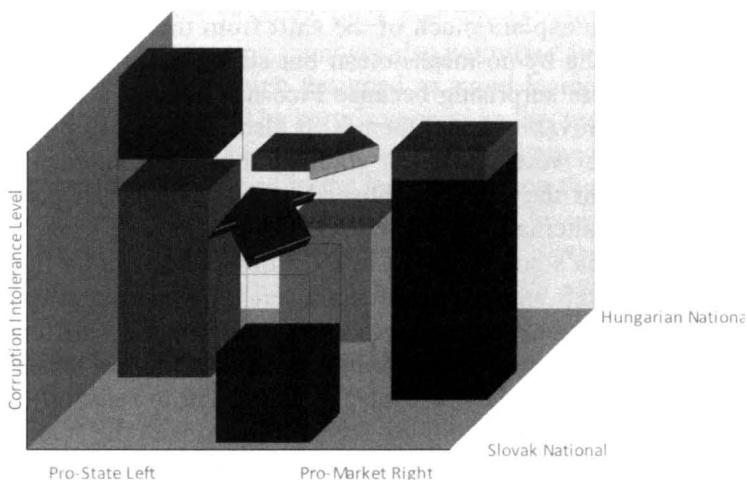
⁶Institute for Public Affairs. 2010. "SaS berie hlasy Smeru a SDKÚ, Most získava voličov SMK." Available online: <http://www.ivo.sk/6082/sk/aktuality/sas-berie-hlasy-smeru-a-sdku-most-ziskava-volicov-smk>, last accessed 7 May 2012.

⁷Haughton, Tim, Novotná, Tereza and Deegan-Krause, Kevin (2011) "The 2010 Czech and Slovak Parliamentary Elections: Red Cards to the 'Winners,'" *West European Politics*, 34: 2, 394-402

from large economic interests.⁸ Nor do shifts in the nationally-oriented Slovak voters reflect a fundamental decline in the strength of the Slovak national position *per se*, but rather a shift of Slovak national voters from the smaller parties with stronger emphasis on national questions to Fico's larger and more diffuse but sufficiently national and less corrupt alternative.

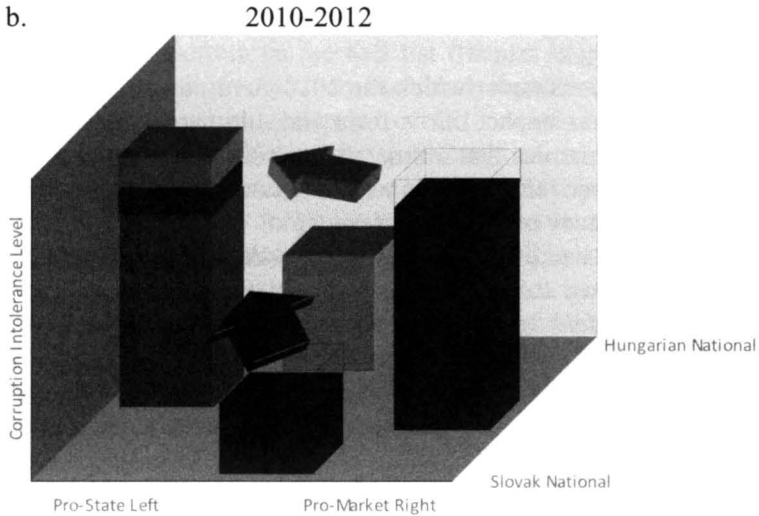
Figure 3a below graphically illustrates the conjectured shift of the most "corruption intolerant" voters of SNS and HZDS to *Smer* (the arrow pointing up and left) and the corruption-intolerant *Smer* to SaS (the arrow pointing straight right). (Shifts also occurred within the "right" (from SDKÚ to SaS) and within the Hungarian national (from MKP-SMK to *Most-Híd*) but for simplicity's sake those are not shown here.)

Figure 3. Hypothesized shifts in party bloc support during Slovakia's most recent two election cycles
a. 2006-2010



⁸*SME*, 2012, "Časť spisu Gorila potvrdil policajt, ktorý informoval Pentu", 3 January, available online at

<http://www.sme.sk/c/6203225/cast-spisu-gorila-potvrdil-policajt-ktory-informoval-pentu.html#ixzz1w9ojAJgG>, last accessed 24 May 2012.



The shifts between 2010 and 2012 were smaller but also important. Surveys suggest that a few additional voters shifted from Slovak-national parties such as SNS and HZDS to *Smer* and that some supporters of the SDKÚ and its coalition partners shifted back to *Smer*, while within the coalition voters also shifted to the new Ordinary People and Independents (OLaNO). Figure 3b depicts these shifts in the form of twin arrows pointing to the left, with new and returning party voters. SaS avoided the “government death” that has affected every new party entering government since 1994—the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS), the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), and the Party of the New Citizen (ANO)—but it came very close to failing. Even though SaS did not have to serve a full term in government and dropped out of visible participation in government in order to run as anti-political outsiders in late 2011, it returned to parliament in 2012 with half of its 2010 strength, less than one percentage point above the 5% threshold

This third dimension of politics in Slovakia is not the main one or even the secondary one. It is likely that fewer voters care about corruption than the major national and economic issues, but because the economic and national blocs are narrowly balanced, corruption has a major impact on the creation of parliamentary majorities and the formation of governments.

2010: Three Dimensions, One Government, Four (and a half) Parties.

The conditions under which the 2010 government gained its majority had a clear impact on its form and, ultimately, its inability to endure. The dynamics that ultimately sank the coalition mixed questions of economic left and right with questions of national consciousness and the legacy of new party formation.

Those who had little contact with Slovakia during the late 2000's might be excused for experiencing the 2010 Radičová government with a bit of *déjà vu*. The names of some of the parties changed slightly from the 2002 Dzurinda government, but the general array was almost identical. *Most-Híd* replaced the Party of the Hungarian Coalition in the Hungarian national slot, and one new pro-market anti-corruption party "Freedom and Solidarity" (SaS) replaced another (the now defunct Alliance of the New Citizen). Ten of the fifteen cabinet posts remained in the hands of the same party that controlled them in 2002 (or its analog) and seven of the fifteen ministers who took office in 2010 had served in the 2002-2006 cabinet (in several cases heading the same respective ministries that they had managed earlier in the decade).

The actual performance of the government is difficult to assess because it lasted such a short time. Hardly a year passed between the government's appointment and the beginning of the Euro bailout crisis that absorbed its entire attention and brought about its demise. During its brief tenure, the government's ability to make change was further limited not only by a narrow political margin, but by constant threats of fragmentation. Particularly notable in this regard were the frequent shifts of four deputies associated with the aforementioned obscure civic movement called "Ordinary People" (OL).⁹ These four

⁹ In a piquant sign of the tactics played during election campaigns in Slovakia, the leader of a defunct but still-formally-registered party successfully changed its appellation to Ordinary People (OL) just hours before the parliamentary caucus came to register the same name. The leaders of the caucus were thus turned away at the party registration desk and forced to find an alternative, registering several weeks later as Ordinary People and Independents (OLaNO). See *Pravda*, 2011, "Móric, ktorý si zaregistroval stranu Obyčajní ľudia, návrat nechystá", 1 November, available online: http://spravy.pravda.sk/moric-ktory-si-zaregistroval-stranu-obycajni-ludia-navrat-nechysta-lgn-/sk_domace.asp?c=A111101_200428_sk_domace_p29#ixzz1-wC5KUTuJ, last accessed 24 May 2012.

deputies managed unexpectedly to leap into parliament from positions at the very bottom of the SaS list (thanks to preference votes gained from prominent spots in the local commercial inserts that were the main business enterprise of OL's leader, Igor Matovič). Therefore, they owed little loyalty to SaS and were able to stall key government initiatives through repeated threats of departure.

In economic affairs, Radičová's government was relatively unified but had limited space for policy innovation. Its efforts were forestalled in part by past successes: the Dzurinda government managed to demonstrate significant coalition discipline during its 2002-2006 term and, though possessed of a slight parliamentary majority, it managed to pass major economic reforms in taxation, health care, education, the labor market and other aspects of the foreign investment climate. Furthermore, although the Fico government between 2006 and 2010 engaged in high-profile increases in pensions and family benefits and made changes to the labor law, the party actually did little to alter the fundamental framework of the Dzurinda government and presented few opportunities for Radičová's government to reclaim lost ground.

On the axis of cultural and religious questions the coalition had little hope of agreement, as it included the parties at both extremes of the axis: SaS supported gay marriage and drug legalization while the KDH (Christian Democratic Movement) supported traditional Christian values and a stronger relationship with the Vatican. Fortunately for the coalition, however, this axis did not constitute one of the more salient lines of conflict in Slovakia's politics, and the coalition simply stayed clear of most cultural issues in order not to create a deeper intra-coalition rift.

On national identity and foreign policy Radičová's government was not so lucky. On taking office in 2010, the parties that formed the new government shared a common pro-Western outlook and (relatively) accommodating views on ethnic co-existence and national identity, but they found it difficult to translate these positions into policy. On minority-rights issues the coalition's Hungarian and Slovak parties differed over what should constitute "appropriate" support for minority culture. *Most-Híd* sought to reverse the more restrictive language and citizenship policies of the 2006-2010 Fico government, but the Slovak parties of the coalition sought to avoid appearing weak in their dealings with the assertively nationalist gov-

ernment in neighboring Hungary or, by extension, the Hungarian population with Slovakia.

On international integration issues, the coalition also failed to find consensus. In this case the dissenting coalition party was SaS, whose generally pro-Western approach conflicted with its neo-liberalism on the question of Slovakia's obligation as part of the Eurozone. After numerous "negotiated solutions" and apparent agreements between SaS and the other coalition parties, the leaders of Radičová's SDKÚ raised the stakes and hoped to force SaS into compliance by linking the Eurozone bailout to a vote of confidence in the government, but the SaS refused to budge. *Smer*, which nominally supported the bailout, refused to prolong Radičová's government by voting in its favor. Once Radičová's government collapsed and new elections were underway, *Smer* joined with Radičová's party and several others in ensuring passage of the bailout.

2012: Three Dimensions, One Government, One Party.

The Eurozone-related vote of no confidence led to early elections on 10 March 2012. As the sections above suggest, the relatively small shifts in public opinion produced a significant difference in government orientation and an even more significant difference in government composition. Slovakia has its first one-party majority government since 1989 and the outcomes bear close attention. On economic questions, *Smer* retains a moderately pro-redistribution position, but the 2012 Fico government has acknowledged that it faces budgetary constraints that will limit its potential largesse, and some top party officials have interests in international finance that may (as with Slovakia's adoption of the Euro in 2009) encourage a relatively conservative fiscal policy. Indeed the party's budget for 2013 included a combination of austerity measures and tax increases that won praise from Western investors.¹⁰ On national questions *Smer* has previously expressed wariness toward Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, but the 2012 Fico government has appointed a moderate, professional diplomat as foreign minister, and as with financial questions, some of Fico's closest supporters have

¹⁰Ciensi, Jan, 2012, "Fico: Austerity rules," *Financial Times*, 23 May, available online: <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2012/05/23/fico-austerity-rules/#axzz1w9z-H5aGM>, last accessed 24 May 2012.

more moderate positions than others. On corruption questions, Fico's party has a less-than pristine record, but the revelations of the recent "Gorilla" scandal about connections between large firms and party finance on Slovakia's right allowed *Smer* to appear relatively clean by comparison. Complete control of government may in this regard prove somewhat disadvantageous as *Smer* will become the main focus of corruption allegations. In each case, Fico's own party faces internal divisions along the same lines as the party system as a whole. It is obviously not as deeply riven as Radičová's coalition, but the exact same lines of stress sometimes (in obscure and ambiguous ways) produce cracks in the party's veneer of unity.

While intra-party competition within *Smer* is highly imperfect as a mechanism of accountability, it will play a critical role during the coming Fico government. Like Vladimír Mečiar in 1992 and 1994, Fico is returning to Slovakia's top position after a brief interlude of government by a coalition of strange bedfellows. Each time Mečiar returned in the early 1990's he engaged in bolder use (and frequently misuse) of government authority in an attempt to regain and maintain control. Fico, by contrast, began his return to government not with radical change but with calls for cooperation, and his personnel appointments in many areas seemed to reflect a turn toward moderation. As tempting as it is to compare Fico with Mečiar, the two are not alike. And even if their personalities did incline them toward the same efforts, their experiences and constraints are different. On the one hand, Fico's political position is currently so strong that he has no need to hurry into *anything*. At the same time, Fico may also be more aware of the need for caution: unlike Mečiar in 1994, Fico was removed from the prime ministership in 2010 by the *voters*, and he may be more aware than Mečiar of voters' ability to express displeasure. Regardless of the reason, the inauspicious example of political development in neighboring Hungary make it particularly reassuring that (as of this writing) Fico has not used his political strength to alter Slovakia's democratic institutions to his own advantage. As the very nature of this article suggests, however, change can come quickly.

DOCUMENTATION

THE MILITARY MISSIONS OF MILAN R. ŠTEFÁNIK IN RUSSIA ON BEHALF OF THE CZECH AND SLOVAK CAUSE (BASED UPON DOCUMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN ARCHIVES)

Evgeny F. Firsov

This paper focuses on Milan R. Štefánik's recruitment of Czech and Slovak volunteers for the Czechoslovak¹ national movement in Russia during the First World War. It is based upon original materials identified in the Russian archives in the Russian, Czech, Slovak and French languages, including from the Department of written sources of the State Historical Museum (then – OPI GIM).

Milan R. Štefánik (1880-1919), Slovak by origin, naturalized in France, was undoubtedly one of the most visible and popular figures among Czechs and Slovaks abroad during the First World War. In one reference to the Czechoslovak diaspora and to prisoners of war in Russia, it was underlined that the success of the national movement was guaranteed by the activity of M. R. Štefánik. This document made the flattering assessment:

You know who Štefánik is. He is from the Slovak Nitra region on the border with Moravia, once the center of the former Great Moravian Empire of Svätopluk, which was the natural center of the Czechoslovak nation. He is a member and plenipotentiary of the Czechoslovak National Council, the authorized representative of Prof. Masaryk. A renowned scholar, a hero, who distinguished himself on the French, Italian and Serbian fronts, he is a first-class and influential diplomat.²

¹ In the Russian documents of that time Czecho-Slovak was written, as a rule, as one word. And Štefánik adhered to the Czechoslovak orientation.

² OPI GIM, f. 151. N.F. Melnikova-Kedrova-Řivnáč. Materialy J. Papouška. Hektograf na češském jazyce. February, 14, 1917. See also Evgeni Firsov, „Hektografické materiály a korespondence v propagandě patriotického hnutí českých a slovenských zajatců v Rusku,“ *Historie a vojenství* 1 (Praha, 2003), 23-36.

In Soviet historiography before 1990, Štefánik was considered one of the initiators of foreign intervention in Russia and a supporter of Admiral Kolchak. Despite this, his name can be found in the *Soviet Encyclopedia*. Furthermore, in Soviet and other historiography, Štefánik appeared as an anti-hero, in spite of all his achievements in the national liberation of the Czechs and Slovaks.³ Only in 2001, on the initiative of Igor Furdik, Ambassador Extraordinary of Slovakia to Russia, and due to the efforts of a number of Russian historians (including the author of this article) and Slovak historian Joseph Husar, there appeared a really objective work: *Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Novyj vzgl'ad* [Milan Rastislav Štefánik. A New Approach] (Martin, 2001). It is remarkable that the book was published in Slovakia. As expressed by Ambassador Furdik, the new situation in Central Europe finally allowed a fair and balanced assessment of Milan R. Štefánik.⁴

Štefánik's personality characteristics in Russian sources are generally very positive and sympathetic. They repeatedly illustrated his courage and sacrifice. Štefánik initially arrived in Russia in 1916 as an emissary of the French military and only later as a representative of the Czechoslovak National Council. In Czechoslovakia, the Slovak sociologist Anton Štefánek pointed out that to Štefánik

...we owe the fact that no one can rule over the Slovaks and the Slovak language, and Slovak national traditions regained their freedom, something which everybody was dreaming of, and that our ancestors had been waiting for. The history of the Slovak people would apparently have developed quite differently had it not been for Štefánik.⁵

Štefánik appeared as a stoic person, but he was in poor health. He was ready to go to the end of the world for T. G. Masaryk and to

³ *Sovetskij enciklopedicheskij slovar'* (Moskva, 1982), 15-17, "Štefánik"; L. Holotík, *Štefánikovská legenda a vznik ČSR* (Bratislava, 1958).

⁴ *Milan Rastislav Štefánik. Novyj vzgl'ad* (Martin, 2001), 9; Evgenij F. Firsov, „Bojovník za národnú slobodu. M.R.Štefánik vo svetle ruských prameňov,“ in *M. R. Štefánik v zrkadle prameňov a najnovších poznatkov historiografie* (Bratislava, 2010). For a bibliography of the proceedings of the author about the national movement of Czechs and Slovaks of this period, see Evgenij Firsov, *Scholars of Bohemian, Czech and Czechoslovak History Studies I (A-I)* (Prague, 2005), 262-68.

⁵ *Slovenský denník*, 7, 1924, p.102.

carry out any mission in distant Russia. The correspondence between Masaryk and Edvard Beneš (from the Prague archives) shows that neither one was initially in any hurry to go to Russia. Beneš justified his unwillingness to go by teaching a course on Czech history and literature from the sociological aspect at the Paris Higher Institute of Oriental Languages⁶. Masaryk was engaged in similar activities in London. So it was necessary for Štefánik to go to Russia.

On July 26, 1916, The French General Staff issued an order, signed by the deputy Chief of Staff General Pellé, authorizing a "special mission" to Russia. By this order, Lieutenant Štefánik (led by General Maurice Janin) would be allowed by Russia to organize a group of Austrian prisoners of war of Czech nationality to serve in France in Russian units or in special units. These would be formed on the basis of an agreement between France and Russia.⁷ The Czech troops were supposed to serve on the French front, but not on the Russian, to ensure their future independence from Russia. The French Command believed that Štefánik's mission should be limited to the recruitment of Czech and Slovak volunteers in order to strengthen the military forces of France.⁸

Long and difficult negotiations (and even "nervousness," as noted by contemporaries) during the summer of 1916 and the spring of 1917, and again between November 1918 and January 1919, ensued. Štefánik had to deal with former Czech member of the Austrian Parliament Josef Dürich and his followers and with the board of the Union of Czech and Slovak Societies in Russia. He was assisted by Bohdan Pavlů and a group of Petrograd Czechs. Štefánik finally has managed to incline Slovak national groups in Russia to the pro-Czechoslovak and pro-French orientation of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris.⁹

Upon his arrival in Russia, Štefánik was able to make a most favorable impression upon the leaders of the diplomatic office of *Stav-*

⁶ TGM – EB. *Korespondence* (Praha, 2004), 192.

⁷ Milan Rastislav Štefánik v archívnych dokumentoch Historickej služby francúzskeho ministerstva obrany. Ed. Frédéric Guelton a i. (Bratislava: Ministerstvo obrany SR, 2009), 55.

⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁹ See more details see E. Firsov, „Boj za orientáciu českého a slovenského národnoslobodzovacieho hnutia v Rusku v rokoch 1915-1917,“ *Historický časopis* 43, no. 1 (1995), 47-68.

ka (General Headquarters – E.F.) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (further – MFA). As the August 2, 1916 letter of Basili (the Chief of the Diplomatic office of *Stavka*) to A. Neratoff in MFA of stated: "In the middle of August Štefánik arrived, a Lieutenant in the French service, originally a Czech (! – E.F.). General Alekseev (Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander – E.F.), as well as I, were impressed by Štefánik as a sensible and intelligent man"¹⁰. Basili then continued:

In my conversations, I repeated to him (Štefánik – E.F.) what I had to tell his countrymen, that the success of the Czech cause depended upon ending, as soon as possible, the disagreement among the Czechs working with us....and that we did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of the Czechs, but of course expect them to keep in mind their natural duty primarily to Russia. Štefánik went from Stavka to Kiev, where he attended a meeting of Czech leaders. At his suggestion, they created the Association of Czechs in Russia. At the head of the new organization will be Dürich, with a staff, elected in agreement with the Czechoslovak National Council.¹¹

Štefánik showed much more useful activities with the organization of Czech troops, according to Basili.¹² Furthermore, Basili went on,

The role played by Štefánik in concluding an agreement with Dürich, and the latter's fear of Štefánik, makes us want to turn him from the Czech cause in Russia, since he could be useful to us in military terms. From this point of view the commissioning of persons proposed to you by Štefánik is also undesirable because of their deliberate Masaryk coloring.¹³

After this message of August 30, 1916, A. Neratoff informed Basili that:

...all negotiations on the Czech political system are concentrated in the hands of Masaryk. Dürich's activity is re-

¹⁰ AVPRI, Dipkanceljarija. Op. 61. D. 93. L. 96.

¹¹ AVPRI, Dipkanceljarija. Op. 61. D. 93. L. 96o6.-98.

¹² AVPRI, Dipkanceljarija. Op. 61. D. 93. L. 105.

¹³ AVPRI, Dipkanceljarija. Op. 607. D. 93. L. 107.

*stricted to propaganda among the Czech prisoners of war in Russia, under the close supervision of Masaryk's agents, the most important of which is Štefánik.*¹⁴

The main result of this exchange was the September, 1916 conclusion that it was necessary to make efforts to retain the main center of the Czechoslovak movement in Russia. World War I would decide on the structure of Central Europe based upon new principles.

Thus, we can conclude that the results of the first Štefánik mission to Russia almost did not depend on him (in spite of the fact that in historical literature it was judged a failure).¹⁵ This was especially true because at the beginning of August 1916, i.e. before Štefánik's arrival in Russia, the Council of Ministers had rejected a request by the French government to allow a significant number of prisoners of war to be transferred to France. Štefánik's mission led to the neutralization of Masaryk's competitor in Russia, Josef Dürich, and paved the way for T.G. Masaryk's coming to Russia as the leader of the Czechoslovak national movement a few months after the February, 1917 revolution.

The archival materials of Jaroslav Papoušek, discovered by us, included letters to Bohdan Pavlů, a close colleague and authorized representative of M. R. Štefánik. They complete the history of the struggle for the recognition of the Masaryk program for the independent Czechoslovak State from the "Russian" colony of Czechs and Slovaks. They also cover the creation of the Council headed by Dürich, as well as the history of its collapse. With the strong support of Milan R. Štefánik, a decisive role in this was played by representatives of the so-called Petrograd opposition (B. Pavlů, J. Papoušek, J. Klecanda, etc.). Supported by M. R. Štefánik, they carried out the decisions of Masaryk and his Council in Paris. In this regard, the literature on the Legionnaires, which alluded to the spontaneous connection of "Russian" Czechs and Slovaks to Masaryk's program, is unconvincing.¹⁶

¹⁴For more about this see E. Firsov, „Milan Rastislav Štefánik (po operativnym materialam zarskoj i kolčakovskoj vlasti),“ in *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: novyj vzgl'ad* (Martin, 2001), 41.

¹⁵See for example, K. Pichlik, B. Klípa., J. Zabloudilová, *Českoslovenští legionáři (1914-1920)* (Praha, 1996).

¹⁶See, for example, Josef Kudela, *S našim vojskem na Rusi* (Praha, 1923).

Now we will present at least part of a letter, written by M. R. Štefánik in Petrograd in February of 1917, and addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It reads in part:

Your Excellency, I have the honor hereby to inform Your Excellency that the Czechoslovak National Council unanimously agreed to exclude the deputy J. Dürich from membership in the National Council. I consider it my duty to inform Your Excellency of the sad act which was forced upon the Czechoslovak National Council by Mr. Dürich's actions.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration and deep devotion.

Milan Štefánik, a member of the Czechoslovak National Council, in Petrograd, February 9, 1917.

His Excellency Mr. Minister of Foreign Affairs N. N. Pokrovsky¹⁷.

Then followed a detailed explanation by Štefánik. The text consists of more than fourteen pages. On Štefánik's letter there appears a hand-written notation: it was read by the Minister at a meeting on February 10, 1917.

From these documents it is clear that Štefánik's efforts as the representative of the Paris Czechoslovak National Council were ultimately aimed at weakening Russia's geopolitical influence in Central Europe.

We now proceed to the next arrival of M. R. Štefánik in Russia, this time in Siberia. This information is taken mainly from the Admiral Kolchak government reports (mostly from the collections of GARF). It is not my intention to reproduce the history of Kolchak's government in the Siberian expanses of Russia, nor to give a detailed explanation of the relations between the Siberian Provisional Government at Omsk and the Czechoslovak Legions. For us it was more important to look at the general condition and spirit of the Czechoslovak troops on the eve of Štefánik's arrival in Siberia through Vladivostok, and to reproduce for the first time important materials about Štefánik's activities.

¹⁷ AVPRI, F. Osobyj politotdel. D., 224.

The relationship between the Czechoslovak military units and the Provisional Siberian Government, according to the operative information of Štefánik, evolved quite favorably. In reports from the summer of 1918 it was noted that almost brotherly relations had been established with the Czechs and Slovaks, based on a community of mutual interests and goals. On behalf of the Allies, the French side gave official thanks to the Czechs and Slovaks for their actions and their willingness to contribute to the opening of a second front.¹⁸

The first mention of Štefánik (who at this time was identified as a Czech) was found in a telegram of November 5, 1918, from the Siberian command headquarters in Omsk, that is, a few days before the Kolchak coup. It said that the Allies knew about the expansion of the Czechoslovak military units, and their rebelliousness was seen as a desire to leave Russia. It further stated: "General Janin, with Czech General Štefánik, arrived in Russia to command the Czechs and to arrange for help. The latter condemns the policy of the Czech National Council."¹⁹ The documents further stated that the Omsk events (Kolchak's coup) were favorably received by the Allies.

Štefánik arrived in Siberia in an emergency situation, especially with the intention of inspecting the situation. He was powerless to affect the general course of events. No less important, and quite a delicate task, was to quell a strong revolutionary and even pro-Bolshevik unrest in the ranks of the Czech and Slovak troops. He also had to overcome the anti-Kolchak' spirit of the troops (spread immediately after the coup), and to persuade their leaders to cooperate with the new Siberian power, as the other Allies had already done. Those believed that the Czechoslovaks should not leave Russia until their presence was no longer necessary for intervention. Meanwhile, the Czechoslovak army in Russia was also essential to Prague, as it was one of the guarantors of the projected boundaries of the newly-created Czechoslovak Republic.

The binding of Czech and Slovak troops to the new government did not happen immediately. The operative information at the end of November, 1918 was that the Czechoslovak army had no sympathy

¹⁸ See E. Firsov, „Milan Rastislav Štefánik (po operativnym materialam carskoj i kolčakovskoj vlasti)“, in *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: novyj vzgl'ad* (Martin, 2001), 35-56.

¹⁹ GARF. F. 162.

for the violent upheaval at Omsk and considered the crisis unfinished and looked forward to its resolution by legal means.

Among the Czechoslovak Army Corps demands arose to send these military units home. The critical attitude of the Czechoslovak army during 1919 did not change. The Kolchak government failed to recruit it for the front. Its Council of Ministers even promised to reward the Czechoslovak army in the struggle for the revival of Russia by giving it the right to acquire real estate.

The general condition of Czechoslovak forces was compared in the reports with the situation in the Russian army. It was noted that Czech and Slovak officers quickly became right-wing and the rank-and-file left-wing, with a gap growing between them.

After General Štefánik's arrival, Admiral Kolchak, in a telegram of December 20, 1918 to the Russian Ambassador in Paris, informed him that: "General Janin has arrived, whom we expected with impatience, hoping to resolve urgent problems of command together with him and Štefánik..."²⁰.

In our view, many complications stemmed not only from the fact that the Czech and Slovak commanders often acted (according to Kolchak) quite independently, but also that the mass of the Czech and Slovak Legionaries saw in Kolchak's government the danger of the restoration of the old pre-revolutionary order. It was no secret that the Legionnaires' political orientations were formed by the party of social revolutionaries. By tremendous persuasion General Štefánik managed to turn the Czech and Slovak troops into allies of Kolchak.

In conversations with the Czech and Slovak troops, Štefánik set out to fulfill promises which were made to the Allies – to protect the Trans-Siberian Railway, which the Legionnaires had captured, as well as the city of Omsk. He even had to struggle with cases of insubordination. His most radical step was to publish order Number 588 on January 16, 1919, which was announced after his departure. According to this order, the army and democracy were incompatible. Therefore, all elected committees of the Russian Army type were to be dissolved. A few days later Štefánik left Siberia, apparently due to ill health.

²⁰ E. Firsov, „Milan Rastislav Štefánik (po operativnym materialam carskoj i kolčakovskoj vlasti),“ in *Milan Rastislav Štefánik: novyj vzgl'ad* (Martin, 2001), 45-46.

The most detailed archival materials on Štefánik's activities in Siberia are contained in the July 3, 1919 Department of State Protection report to Kolchak's government. It covers the long period from the fall of 1918 to the summer of 1919. This report, signed by Lieutenant Colonel Russiyanov (some reports were signed by an agent nicknamed "Summer"), noted:

While the Czechoslovaks had plenty of everything, and everyone was interested in them, when they felt that they were in charge, [they] did not feel homesick and forgot the drought at home. But when their position had deteriorated, and they receded into the background, discontent arose among them... Their commanders, wishing to suppress a rising discontent, and at the same time to constrain the demoralizing propagation of "Committees" among them, have welcomed to Russia General Štefánik, who is clothed with the authority of the Republic...Štefánik informed them that, as of his arrival, the Czechoslovak army became a regular army of the Czechoslovak Republic. Štefánik promised that he would do everything in his power to alleviate the Czechoslovaks' situation in Siberia and to ensure their return home as soon as possible..."²¹

One of the representatives of Kolchak's Department of State Protection even declared that "almost without exception, all social classes have turned against the Czechoslovaks. Always it heard that the Czechoslovaks have undertaken not to work for them."²²

What were the results of this Siberian tour? Almost a century later, contrary to the negative opinions regarding Štefánik's stay in Russia,²³ positive results are also evident. Štefánik helped to unite the Czechoslovak army, to increase its combat capability, and to make it a part of the newly-created Czechoslovak Republic. He persuaded the Legionaries to endure for a bit longer, even though they were so far from their native land. Russian sources also speak of Štefánik's merits and to his expulsion of the most Russophobe-minded members of the Czechoslovak National Council, who opposed Kolchak.²⁴

²¹ GARF. F. 147. Op. 8. D. 40.

²² GARF. F. 147. Op. 8. D. 40. L. 58o6.

²³ See for example, L. Holotík, "*Štefánikovská legenda a vznik ČSR*" (Bratislava, 1958).

²⁴ *S Kolčakom, protiv Kolčaka* (Moskva, 2007), 137.

Thanks to Štefánik, many Russian troops, earlier divided over the Czechoslovak army, went over to Kolchak. Štefánik helped to smooth the friction between French General Janin and Admiral Kolchak. With Štefánik's sudden departure from Siberia, the relationship between the Allies and Kolchak deteriorated and latent plans were nurtured about the secret withdrawal of Czechoslovak troops from the zone of Kolchak's power. Thus the fate of the Siberian governor was sealed by the Allies.

Nevertheless, the Allies still continued to watch over Kolchak, for they were attracted by the Russian gold reserves²⁵ and an incredible desire to profit by them. They were not able to provide to the Russian government of Kolchak substantial military aid and the mission of Janin and the Allies turned from a military to a diplomatic one.

In the words of G. K. Gins (whose work "Siberia, the Allies and Kolchak" has been published several times in Russia) "the consciousness of common Slavonic problems, the adherence to culture which was broken by Bolshevism – could it be understood by an ordinary Czech soldier?"²⁶ Štefánik was one of the few who perceived these problems and planted this understanding with another compatriot. The book of G.K. Gins, a former manager of the Kolchak government, contains the highest praise for Štefánik and his stay in Omsk. Gins concludes that the Czech Legionnaires' saga in Russia was not heroic in itself. It contributed nothing to the Slavic peoples, to Siberia or to Russia. The Czechs and Slovaks just wanted to go home.²⁷

In 2007 a book entitled "With Kolchak against Kolchak" appeared. This work leaves much to be desired. The section about Štefánik, for example, contains many mistakes. The name "Štefánik" on page 137 is distorted and the years of his life are not specified. Furthermore, it asserted that Štefánik was "ill in Siberia and moved to Czechoslovakia," and further in this book, "...he came for the evacuation of the Czechoslovak Corps, and on September 2, 1920

²⁵ RGVA, f. 1198. Dokumental'nyje materialy po istorii sozdanija čecho-slovackogo gosudarstva.

Kollekcija. CCXIII. General Janin E. Benešu. Omsk, 29.X.1919. The document in particular says: «Je provoque mesures pour transférer réserve d'or».

²⁶ G.K Gins., *Sibir', sojuzniki i Kolčak* (Moskva, 2008), 578.

²⁷ Ibid., 574-75.

departed from Vladivostok to Czechoslovakia²⁸ (but we know that Štefánik died on May 4, 1919).

Most recently, valuable sources of the Russian State Military Archives (further – RGVA) relating to the national liberation struggle of Czechs and Slovaks in the First World War have become available. Of special interest are materials containing confidential correspondence (most often marked "urgent") by the Chief of Allied forces in Siberia, General Maurice Janin, with various authorities. They include numerous dispatches (intercepted by Kolchak's counterespionage) sent by Janin to the French command, and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic, Edvard Beneš. An exchange of telegrams was also conducted with the commander of Czechoslovak troops in Siberia.

More steadfast analysis of this considerable block of archival materials still needs to be carried out. The materials reveal a lot about the role of the Allies in Siberia, and especially characterize the relationship of the Allies, General Janin and the Czechoslovak army with Kolchak's government. The RGVA block also contains some interesting materials relating to Štefánik's stay in the camp of the Czechoslovak army and Kolchak's, and Štefánik's reports to Beneš. And here one can draw a general conclusion that as a military commander and as a representative of the new Czechoslovak Republic, Štefánik enjoyed unprecedented respect and trust. Estimations of Štefánik contained in Janin's dispatches are positive and respectful.

In summary, we will now underline the importance of Štefánik's military missions in Russia. During his first mission, Štefánik made the break which led to Dürich's downfall and this made things easier for T. G. Masaryk, who arrived after the February revolution in 1917. The second mission in Siberia and to the Far East, appears unfinished because Štefánik's health deteriorated. However, there was also a disagreement with Maurice Janin, the commander-in-chief of the armies of the Entente. As a result, Štefánik abruptly left Siberia in order to take part in the Paris Peace Conference, even though he was not officially included in the Czechoslovak delegation. He intended to use his abilities, his influence at the highest levels and his diplomatic skills to uphold Czechoslovak (and especially Slovak) affairs. The important question of the frontiers of the new state was

²⁸ *S Kolčakom, protiv Kolčaka* (Moskva, 2007), 137.

solved. And the merits of Štefánik, judging by the memoirs of representatives of Great Britain, were recognized as considerable.²⁹ The arrival of Štefánik strengthened the Slovak component in the argument for an independent Czecho-Slovak state.

At the Paris Conference Štefánik was named "the Czech Military Minister;" he left the impression of a mobile, and in contrast to the corpulent Karel Kramář, a "vigorous and imperious figure." Those who remembered Štefánik at the Conference considered his death an "essential loss, as by temperament Štefánik was sparkling champagne compared to the Czech spirit of heavy beer."³⁰

OOXI

Omsk 27/X 1919

Generalu Syrovy

Irkutsk

Situace na frontě špatná. Levé křídlo v plném ustupu. Střed a pravé křídlo ustupuje pozvolna, poskytující dosti tvrdší odpór, však vzhledem k ustupu levého křídla musí také ustupovati.

Osobně pro tentokrát nechovám pevné naděje v úspěchu nějaké protiofensivy. Myslím že v brzké se začne s evakuací Omska. Pochybují že se vláda v případě evakuace Omska udrží.

Prosim přikazati zachovati v Armádě pořádek. Zlomkům Č. Sl. armády nacházejícím se ještě v Omsku dati patričné rozkazy k eventuelní evakuaci

Čisl. 573

Generál JANIN.

Illustration 1. Instructions of General Janin to General Syrovy in connection with the planned evacuation of Czechoslovak troops from Omsk (The source is from RGVA, Russia)

²⁹ G. Nikolson, *Kak delalsja mir v 1919 g.* (Moskva, 1945), 251.

³⁰ Ibid.

CCXIII

Expédié d'Omsk le 29 Octobre 1919.

Voie française

Communiquer Docteur BENEŠ.

Retraite continue la gauche est sur l' ICHIM ou peu en avant PETROPAVLOSK; le reste à peu près de mi-chemin entre les 2 rivières.

Troupes sont très usées, démoralisées, les réserves douteuses. J' éprouve vives craintes au sujet d' OMSK, que partage je crois savoir le Commandement en Chef. Je provoque mesures pour transférer réserve d' or. Situation résultant de l' effondrement du front, de l' évacuation des Allemands et du désordre généralisé est bien difficile.

Général JANIN.

Illustration 2. General Janin informs Edvard Beneš about the measures taken on displacement of the Russian gold reserves (The source is from RGVA, Russia)

REVIEWS

Robert M Zecker, *Streetcar Parishes: Slovak Immigrants Build their Nonlocal Communities, 1890-1945*. Selingsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010. 329pp. Notes, bibliography, index.

M. MARK STOLARIK
University of Ottawa

In this revised Ph.D. dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 1998), Robert M. Zecker set out to prove that Slovaks who lived in six widely dispersed neighborhoods of Philadelphia in the 20th century formed “translocal” (p. 19) communities based upon four parish churches and about a dozen fraternal-benefit societies.

The author dug deeply into census records, city directories, parish and fraternal records, supplemented by oral history interviews and published histories of Philadelphia and other ethnic groups across the United States. He showed that, even though Slovaks in Philadelphia were widely dispersed and lived among other ethnic groups, in the first two generations they socialized mostly among themselves. Indeed, they travelled great distances to attend church services on Sundays as well as fraternal meetings, dances, plays, gymnastic events and other amusements. Not only did they form translocal “imagined communities” (p.160) but they were also trans-confessional because Roman and Greek Catholics, Lutherans and Marxists attended each other’s events and financially supported them.

Zecker also pointed out that Slovaks in Philadelphia, and elsewhere, bought into American race ideology. Thus, they stressed their “whiteness,” as did other ethnic groups, by staging minstrel shows in the 1930's and 1940's and resisted the building of public housing in their neighborhoods. When they lost this fight, they followed other Americans into the suburbs.

Zecker concluded that Slovaks in Philadelphia, like other ethnic groups in America, did not form compact neighborhoods of residence, but were widely dispersed. Nevertheless, they stuck together in the first two generations by attending distant church services, fraternal meetings and a wide variety of social activities. With the arrival of the 1930's New Deal, the post-war automobile boom, and the advent of television in the 1940's, Slovaks, like other Americans, began to move into the suburbs. Although the second generation remained loyal to their parents’ institutions, the third generation lost

interest and their community institutions began to decline and disappear. This is a phenomenon facing all "older" ethnic groups in America.

Since Zecker is admittedly an "outsider" to the Slovak community (p. 214), this book, like others written by American-born and educated scholars, suffers from both linguistic and factual errors. Zecker had to learn Slovak from scratch and never mastered its nuances. Thus, he mistakenly identified "Hutoráks" (it should be *hutoráci*) as Slovaks who originated in the vicinity of the village of "Hutka" (p.27). Instead, "*hutoráci*" is a pejorative term used by Central and Western Slovaks for Eastern Slovaks who do not speak (*hovoria*), but, rather, "*hutoria*" in their own dialect. He mis-translates Slovak "*župy*" as "provinces," when they were counties (p.31). He misspells "*okres*" (district) as "*okra*" (p.35) and "*kmotor*" (godfather) as "*Kumoda*" (p.102). Furthermore, he misspelled and mis-translated the phrase "*tu baž [máš!] vzduch*" as "There's too much air in here," when it should have been "Here's some air" (p.183), and many more such mistakes, too numerous to be listed.

In addition to the above, Zecker also made some factual errors. He mis-identified the social commentator Nicholas von Hoffman as Alexander von Hoffman (pages 16 and 219); he had Lutheran pastors celebrating "Mass" and dispensing "sacraments" (p.155)! He had "Hapsburg troops" firing upon a Slovak crowd in 1907 when Hungarian gendarmes did so (p.278); he identified the Rev. Andrej Hlinka as a deputy in the Hungarian Parliament in 1907 when the latter would not become a member of the provisional Czechoslovak Parliament until 1919 (p.201); and he promoted brigadier-general Milan R. Štefánik into an air marshal (p.204)! The latter errors testified to Zecker's weak knowledge of European history, which is typical of many scholars of American history.

Indeed, when one searches for references to the works of scholars in Slovakia on the subject of immigration, one is disappointed. Even though Zecker went out of his way to detail the history of the tiny group of Slovak Marxists in Philadelphia, he never cited the many articles on this subject by the late Milos Gosiorovský. Nor did he seem to be aware of the three-volume work on Slovak immigration compiled by František Bielik and others.

Finally, even though Zecker presented an impressive bibliography at the end of the book, it was unorganized. Thus, he mixed up

his primary sources (archives, censuses, minutes of fraternal-benefit societies, church records, etc), with secondary sources, largely on American ethnic groups and American history in general. Fortunately, he did list his oral history interviews separately but failed to identify his interviewees.

While the author may have agreed with his informants not to list their full names, he never did identify the leaders of the various Slovak communities (except their priests). We are left wondering who some of the “movers and shakers” were who founded the churches and fraternal-benefit societies, the various businesses, community halls, savings and loan associations, bands, radio programs and so on. This is a weakness found in most American social histories, which stress the “common man” (and woman) but ignore the leaders. Thus, Zecker’s story of the various Slovak communities in Philadelphia remains incomplete.

In spite of these deficiencies, Zecker’s history of Slovaks in Philadelphia is a welcome addition to the field. We now have professional histories of three Slovak communities in the United States - Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, by the author of this review (1985); Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by June Granatir Alexander (1987); and Philadelphia by Robert M. Zecker. May we soon have even more!

Valerián Bystrický, Miroslav Michela, Michal Schvarc a kol., *Rozbitie alebo rozpad? Historické reflexie zániku Česko-Slovenska*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2010. 575 pp., notes, bibliography, English resume, index.

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This is an unusual volume. A title with a question mark implies an answer. However, to demand that thirty-three scholars from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland provide one is problematic, especially when each contributes a specialized examination of an issue, which may, or may not be related directly to the question. Secondly, the chapter breakdown is determined by the contributions rather than a thematic organization arising out of the title.

Thirdly, the book is bilingual (Slovak and Czech). Finally, all contributors share something in common, namely extensive and thorough research in archives, many hitherto inaccessible, and references to authoritative secondary sources, although, with one exception, the list is limited to Central European scholars. This review will highlight those contributions that are deemed worthy of comment either because of their interpretation, their contribution to scholarship, or their pertinence to the question in the title.

In an effort to answer whether post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia (Č-SR) was broken up or collapsed in 1939, the editors divided the book into five thematic chapters and an epilogue of two essays on Slovak historiography. In each chapter, different authors looked at particular issues apparently linked to the theme. The first deals with the Č-SR, from October 1938 to March 1939. The focus is on foreign policy and its consequences on domestic politics, especially Slovak politics. Particularly noteworthy is the contribution by Emilia Hrabovec on the perceptions of the Holy See concerning the future of that state. In the Vatican archives she discovered how the Holy See followed with great interest and interpreted with prudence the domestic and foreign developments that led to the Slovak proclamation of independence in March of 1939 and why it gave diplomatic recognition to the first Slovak Republic. Equally interesting are the contributions by Ľudovít Hallon on economic changes in Slovakia and the preponderant role played by Germany; and by Miloslav Čaplovič on what happened to the Czechoslovak Armed Forces after Munich, especially the transfer of many divisions to Slovakia to protect the state against possible Hungarian and Polish military incursions. Čaplovič also mentions the reorganisation that later resulted in the creation of the Armed Forces of the first Slovak Republic. Jozef Bystrický, in chapter four, offers a detailed analysis of how this happened and also the state of the military forces that responded to Hungarian incursions after independence. The contribution by Valerián Bystrický on the foreign policy activities of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party stands out because of the absence of a contextual perspective. Bystrický bases his article on constitutional legalism to criticize the efforts of members of this party to establish foreign contacts in order to ensure the future of Slovakia when the international situation in Central Europe was deteriorating and the fate of the Č-SR was uncertain.

The second chapter, "Disliked by its neighbours," is on Germany and the Č-SR; Slovakia and Ruthenia in the policies of Hungary and Poland; and the nationality question as a political instrument. The nine contributors provide an interesting analysis of Slovakia's relations with its neighbours at a time when its leaders sought to figure out its future and these neighbours were using the nationality question to achieve their objectives. Slovakia was not "disliked;" rather it was the object of revisionist (Hungary) or strategic policies (Germany and Poland). Most contributions, especially the one by Angela Hermann on German policy toward Slovakia, do indicate that Slovakia's neighbours sought the break up of the Č-SR. What is missing is an assessment on how the Č-SR and Slovak politicians reacted to the political, diplomatic, and military manoeuvring that took place after October 1938. Hermann's contribution makes clear that Slovak leaders understood the realities of power in Central Europe, but also their own responsibility to their nation.

The third chapter has eight contributions on "The March events of 1939." Half offer a study of external reactions to these events; the other half look at specific domestic events or attitudes around the 14 March proclamation. One can learn what the German press, British scholarship, or Americans of Czech and Slovak background thought of these events. The latter contribution by František Hanzlík is, however, very superficial, especially with regards to Slovak Americans. Regarding domestic events, Zlatica Zudová-Lešková's examination of the emergency measures of 10 March is most atypical. Both in tone and content, it is a strident attack on those who do not see these measures as a legitimate response by Č-SR authorities to protect the integrity of that state. In marked contrast, Róbert Letz's study of the attitude of the Catholic Church and its episcopate in Slovakia toward the March events offers a sophisticated glimpse of the interplay of religion, politics, hierarchy, and the need for public order at a time of constitutional change and foreign political and ideological pressure. A limited sociological examination of the general Slovak reaction is found in the presentation by Martin Hetényi on the Nitra region.

"The beginnings of the Slovak State" constitutes the theme of the fourth chapter. It brings together contributions that deal with the formation of the political system; the independence of the judiciary as seen by the leading political party in Slovakia in 1938-1939; the formation of the Slovak Armed Forces; and the departure of Czech sol-

diers from Slovakia after independence. The first two contributions, especially the one by Igor Baka, focus on those elements in the political system emanating from the policies of the regime that, according to the two authors, show the creation of a totalitarian state in Slovakia after March 1939. That the first Slovak Republic became a one-party state is beyond dispute; to conclude, however, that it became totalitarian is to ignore the international and comparative context (with other states at that time or the later Communist one) and the essence of political life in Slovakia, whatever the constitutional or administrative system. Scholarship is not served by approaching this subject with a conceptual bias (i.e. if it was not democratic, then it had to be totalitarian), as these two contributions do. Finally, the two bibliographical contributions in the epilogue make a major contribution to Slovak historiography. Both outline the problems Slovak historiography has had and continues to have, which the essays in this volume reflect.

The variety of views and the disparity of approaches in this book would have been better served with the title: *Break-up and Collapse*, a title, which the contributions underlie and with which every serious scholar specializing in the topic would concur. This volume contributes to a broader understanding of that period but does not help resolve the debates around it. Slovak scholarship still has a long way to go.

Martin Lacko a Ján Sabo, *Žandár troch režimov alebo Slovenské dejiny 20. storočia z iného pohľadu. Gustáv Polčík a jeho služba v Prievidzi v rokoch 1942-1972*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2011. xlv-334 pp., notes, illustrations, bibliography, abbreviations, index.

YESHAYAHU JELINEK
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Prievidza, the home-town of the hero of this monograph (and also of the author of this review), lies in the upper Nitra river valley. At the beginning of World War II, it had about 5,000 inhabitants. Industrialization and more intensive coal mining during the communist era boosted the population to about thirty thousand today. Since the

days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Prievidza boasted a Gendarme (police) station, which served about twenty villages and townships. Between five and ten Gendarmes served there, but came from elsewhere. A bachelor Gendarme was forbidden to marry for the first four years of his service, and especially not to a local woman. The Gendarme was expected to become closely acquainted with the locality, its people, and culture. However, he was also supposed to be neutral in political matters, and not to join any political parties. The latter regulation was changed during the communist era, when all Gendarmes were expected to join the Communist Party and to enforce its rule.

As he related to the compilers of this book, Gustáv Polčík arrived in Prievidza as a Gendarme in the summer of 1942. Four years later he married his village sweetheart and had two daughters with her. The family was apparently very proud of its Gendarme son, as the many photographs of him in his uniform attest. The job guaranteed him a good salary and respect. It was a major move up the social ladder for a village boy. When Polčík retired in 1972, he had reached the rank of major, which was testimony to a successful career in the service of his people in the city of Prievidza.

It is not easy to review a perspective “from the other side,” as the authors/editors of this book titled it. After all, Polčík served three ruling regimes. During the years of the Holocaust, Polčík carried out the official policies of the Slovak Republic, which was allied with Nazi Germany. One of them was to deport Slovak Jews to Poland, where they were exterminated by the Germans. Although Polčík claimed that, because he had arrived in Prievidza in the summer of 1942, the Jews had already been expelled (p.94), this is not credible. The last transport of Jews from that locality left in October of 1942. Nora Kellerman, a Prievidza friend and neighbour of the author of this review described the deportation of her father thus: “Suddenly, two men arrived, a Gendarme and a Hlinka Guard (the Hlinka Guard was a paramilitary force of the ruling Hlinka Slovak People’s Party), they gave father ten minutes to pack his belongings, he kissed us and they escorted him out. I was six years old and never saw my father again.” Clearly, the Gendarmes executed the orders of the government in Bratislava.

Polčík admitted throughout the book that he faithfully executed orders from above. All Gendarmes were trained to do this, even dur-

ing the first Czechoslovak Republic. During the communist period, even though he joined the Party, he sometimes sought to avoid enforcing unpleasant orders with various ruses. Often he convinced himself that the orders were wrong. He did admit that many times the orders gnawed at his conscience. In these instances he sought to avoid carrying them out, but without harm to himself.

A good example of Polčík's reasoning and actions was when he was assigned to serve on the Italian front in 1944. He did not want to go and sought out the commander of the Gendarmerie in Slovakia, Colonel Timotheus Ištók, who happened to come from his native village, and who was friendly with his parents. In spite of being received by Ištók, the orders were not changed. Therefore, Polčík decided to desert to the local partisans (guerrillas), whom he knew, and had assisted in various ways. Ironically, the government bureaucracy continued to pay his wages while he was in active opposition to the regime!

Once the war had ended, Polčík emerged as a resistance fighter and his career continued to blossom. When the Communists seized power in 1948, Polčík joined the Party and continued his climb upward. He even became head of the local Hunter's Association and assisted the Prievidza Communists, who were poorly-educated, to write their reports in his beautiful handwriting. He could also type and, thus, was privy to all the secret reports sent by the government in Bratislava. He always sought to help those whom he could, and to not make any enemies. He was also a non-drinker, which kept him out of trouble.

When all is said and done, what we have here is the life history of an opportunistic public servant, interested above all in his advancement. Therefore, by being very careful, he was able to survive the frequently changing regimes and governments in his homeland. Polčík survived and advanced because he understood how to manage himself in every situation. This book gives us a good insight into the political life of Slovakia over thirty years and how some of the people, like the Gendarme Gustav Polčík, successfully adjusted to three very different political regimes.

Michal Šmigel a Štefan Kruško, *Opcia a presídlenie Rusínov do ZSSR 1945-1947*. Bratislava: Goralinga, 2011. 340pp. appendices, charts, bibliography, resumes.

PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI
University of Toronto

At the close of World War II, world leaders seemed determined to try to create a new political order that, hopefully, would preclude catastrophic conflicts of the kind they had just experienced. Many statesmen felt that national minorities and the ideology of integral nationalism were among the main causes leading to World War II. Therefore, in an attempt to correct this situation, many governments set out to adjust ethnographic boundaries to state boundaries. There were several ways in which this might be achieved: a change in international borders; national assimilation of minority groups; physical extermination; or resettlement.

Population resettlement became an acceptable and favored political solution at the time. The most monumental example of this approach was the displacement of millions of Hindus and Muslims in South Asia to create the new states of India and Pakistan. Postwar Europe also engaged in population resettlement, the best known case being the expulsion in 1946-1947 of over six million Germans (3.2 million from Poland and three million from Czechoslovakia) and their resettlement in the various occupation zones of postwar Germany.

Smaller in scale and much less known were the population exchanges between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. These took place in two phases. When, in June 1945, Czechoslovakia formally ceded its pre-Munich eastern province of Subcarpathian Rus' to the Soviet Union, a protocol to the treaty provided for the right of persons of Slovak and Czech nationality resident in Subcarpathian Rus'/Transcarpathian Ukraine to resettle in postwar Czechoslovakia, and for the right of persons of Ukrainian and Russian nationality in Czechoslovakia—specifically from “districts (*okresy*) in Slovakia”—to resettle in the Soviet Union. Technically, these populations were being given “the right to opt” (*práva opcie*) for either Czechoslovak

or Soviet citizenship, a status which would allow them to resettle permanently in one or the other country.

The second phase came as a result of an accord signed in October of 1946, according to which persons of Czech and Slovak nationality living in the Soviet Union (specifically the Volhynia region of Soviet Ukraine) were to be resettled to Czechoslovakia in exchange for persons of Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian nationality in Czechoslovakia who were to be resettled in the Soviet Union. Despite the various nationalities listed in the treaty, in practice the populations in question were only two: Czechs, who in the nineteenth century had emigrated to what was then the province of Volhynia in the Russian Empire; and Carpatho-Rusyns (Rusnaks), who since their first appearance in the early Middle Ages inhabited relatively compact areas in northeastern Slovakia.

The numbers in both phases were relatively small—about 25,000 persons to Czechoslovakia as a result of the 1945 treaty; followed by 40,000 persons to Czechoslovakia and 12,000 to Soviet Ukraine as a result of the 1946 treaty. The latter exchange was known as the Volhynian Operation/Volynská akcia and was carried out in 1947.

The story of the two Czechoslovak-Soviet population exchanges is the subject of this book by Michal Šmigel, an associate professor of history at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, and Štefan Kruško, a writer and civic activist whose family had opted to go to Soviet Ukraine in 1947 and who later “re-opted” back to Czechoslovakia. Aside from the details of the actual resettlement process between 1945 and 1947, the authors devote the third and last chapter of their book to the fate of the 12,000 Carpatho-Rusyns from northeastern Slovakia who voluntarily opted for the Soviet Union.

No sooner had the transports arrived in the Soviet Union in the spring of 1947, than did the newcomers from Czechoslovakia realize they had made a mistake. Many wanted immediately to go back home, but there was no leaving the “Soviet paradise.” The very thought of doing so could—and did—result in arrests and imprisonment during the height of Stalinist repressive rule. Thus began what turned out to be decades of struggle on the part of the 12,000 Carpatho-Rusyn “exiles” in Soviet Volhynia to return to their Carpathian homeland. In the interim, the children born “in exile” were educated in Ukrainian, while their parents proceeded to claim that they were “Slovaks” (and were generally described as such by local Ukraini-

ans) in an effort to justify their legal right to return to Czechoslovakia.

Beginning in the 1960s, a small but gradually increasing number of families managed to leave Volhynia, settling first in Soviet Transcarpathia, from where some managed to return to Czechoslovakia. The process of return was long and complicated, however, and it did not end until the 1990s, when ironically it was connected with the world's first prominently publicized nuclear disaster. Looking for an excuse to justify the entry for "immigrants" from the east, Slovakia passed a law which allowed for the return of its former citizens from what was described as "the zone [including Volhynia] affected by the Chornobyl nuclear disaster."

The homecoming for the *reoptanty* (those who opted to return) was often far from ideal. Most did not return to their native villages, since local residents—and even family members—were suspicious of people who in 1947 had left for the Soviet east as "Rusnaks," who came back as "Slovaks," often speaking Ukrainian, and who consequently were viewed by their former neighbors as "Russians" (*rusky*), an epithet that in post-1968 Czechoslovakia was, to say the least, not a positive one. Nevertheless, the *reoptanty*, in particular children who left with their parents or who were born in Ukraine, eventually did well after their return to Czechoslovakia. Some found employment in the various Ukrainian minority cultural institutions in Prešov that were liberally funded in Communist-ruled Czechoslovakia. Most, however, assimilated into Slovak society in a conscious effort to distance themselves from the East. Among the best known of the *reoptanty* was Peter Bondra. He was born in Soviet Ukraine to Carpatho-Rusyn parents, who in 1947 were settled in the Soviet Union, but who returned in the 1970s to Slovakia, where Peter was raised and where he learned a new skill—hockey. This allowed him later in life to "re-emigrate," this time to the United States, where he became a star in the National Hockey League.

Šmigel and Kruško have done an excellent job in describing the fascinating tale of one aspect of post-World War II demographic engineering in central and eastern Europe. The narrative is interspersed with statistical charts and historic photographs. Included as well are several appendices: the full texts of the 1945 and 1946 Czechoslovak-Soviet treaties, accompanying protocols, and instructions for implementation; detailed charts with data on the 1947 population

exchanges; an extensive bibliography of archival and secondary sources; and résumés in English and Russian.

M. Mark Stolarik, compiler and editor, *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968: Forty Years Later*. Mundelein, Ill.: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2010. xxxiv-305 pp., notes, photos, index, hard and soft cover.

GREGORY C. FERENCE

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This book is based on the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Ottawa in the fall of 2008. M. Mark Stolarik, who holds the Chair in Slovak History and Culture at that institution, organized the meeting, compiled and edited the papers, as well as contributed most of the photographs. He also wrote the Introduction in which he offered his personal reminiscences of those August days as he witnessed the invasion, the largest military action in Europe since the Second World War. His Introduction gives a brief overview of the subsequent papers and commentaries, and includes excellent footnotes providing first-rate bibliographic material covering the subject. He concludes the Introduction with an almost two-year chronology of the "Prague Spring," from October of 1967 to September of 1969, to better orient the reader.

The authors of the papers and commentaries are a *Who's Who* of specialists on East Central Europe. Participants from countries of the former Warsaw Pact wrote the papers based largely on archival investigations: Mikhail V. Latysh (USSR), Jan Rychlík (Czech Republic), Slavomír Michálek and Stanislav Sikora (Slovakia), Łukasz Kamiński (Poland), Rüdiger Wenzke (East Germany), Ivana Skálová (Bulgaria), Csaba Békés (Hungary), and Dragoș Petrescu (Romania). Americans and Canadians who presented commentaries include: Matthew J. Ouimet (USSR), Michael Kraus (Czech Republic), Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (Slovakia), Piotr Wróbel (Poland), Gary Bruce (East Germany), Mark Kramer (Bulgaria), Peter Pastor (Hungary), and Monica Ciobranu (Romania). At the end of the text, before the

index, Stolarik included "Notes on Contributors," which gives basic biographical information on the participants.

The reader will find many interesting and largely hitherto unknown facts available in the standard works on the subject. For example, at the last minute, the Soviet Union would not allow East Germany to participate in the invasion for fear that it would bring back horrifying memories of the Nazi dismemberment and occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938-1939. Yet, until its dying days, the East German government, which wholeheartedly supported the invasion, and early on argued for its implementation, perpetuated the myth that it was an active participant. Another, perhaps more striking example, would be the claim by Soviet General G. Yashkin that Soviet Marshal Ivan I. Yakubovsky, commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, ordered the invasion of Czechoslovakia in early May of 1968, only to reverse his decision several minutes later. Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, uneasy over events in Czechoslovakia by early spring of 1968, insisted that he be present at the negotiations with Czechoslovakia and pressed for an early solution, despite the fact that Bulgaria had no common border with Czechoslovakia. Yet, after his fall from power, Zhivkov denied any wrongdoing, but instead insisted that he supported the reforms and reluctantly agreed to support the invasion. Whereas Békés presents Hungarian leader János Kádár in a sympathetic light as a grand compromiser, Pastor sees him instead using double speak for domestic consumption. On a more humorous note, Polish leader Władysław Gomułka, an early proponent for intervention, intensely disliked Czechoslovak leader Alexander Dubček and consistently changed the "b" in his name to a "p", thereby rendering his surname in Polish to be an unmentionable part of the human anatomy in polite society.

Constraints of space will not allow a discussion of the individual papers and commentaries. However, of particular note is the attention paid to Romania. This member of the Warsaw Pact neither participated in the discussions leading to nor took part in the invasion itself. Nonetheless, as most are aware, the Romanian regime outwardly supported the reforms and then vehemently attacked the invasion. Although Petrescu's piece is more of a political science approach than the other contributions, he makes a persuasive argument that the invasion provided legitimacy and popular support for Ceaușescu's rise to power after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-

Dej. Ceaușescu would never be as popular as he was in August of 1968, when he unified and rallied the country. However, once firmly in control, he ended economic liberalization and ideological relaxation and became more autocratic, relying on his family members for support, which eventually led to his demise in 1989.

The Soviets ultimately misjudged popular reaction to the 1968 invasion. Petrescu has included an excellent quote from the Romanian dictator that prophetically summed up the results of the invasion, "In my opinion, a big and tragic mistake, with heavy consequences upon the fate of the unity of the socialist system and the international communist and workers movement occurred (252-53)." In short, the invasion mortally wounded the Eastern Bloc's experiment with Communism. It showed that it could not be a viable alternative to liberal democracy and market economics.

This volume is a fine addition to our knowledge of the events of the Prague Spring. Some of the information may be a bit too scholarly for the general reader, but, it is an up-to-date work based on research in archives and other sources opened after 1989. It is a must read for anyone interested in the topic.

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